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1. Elizabethan and Jacobean period

In considering literary works, it is necessary to look at the economic, political and cultural aspects of each period: speaking about the two plays *Richard III* and *Macbeth*, these areas of the sixteenth and seventeenth century will be considered. These areas will not be

analysed thoroughly however: the only aspects crucial to emphasise are cultural changes during each period, namely theatre staging, style and structure, and also some of the authors writing in the above-mentioned periods.

1.1. Elizabethan and Jacobean playhouses

1.1.1. Development of professional companies in England

Generally, the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods were literarywise extremely fruitful, which, however, does not hold true in the case of Elizabethan stage design: there was basically no scenery, and actors tended to explain many things they were doing. Certainly, as Micheal Hattway points out, 'Elizabethan playhouses were not designed for *illusions*' (2002:12). Moreover, although various plays had been performed for many generations, as G.B.Harrison claims 'no permanent playhouse was erected in England until 1576' (1965:9). The exactness of this assertion can be questioned though, as in some chronologies the first open theatre is claimed to be the Red Lion, already providing performances in 1566. However, this variance makes no difference to the fact that, in Tudor England, groups of strolling players toured the country performing plays in the courtyards of inns, and that some temporary companies were attached to the households of noblemen, so 'there was no question of constructing scenic likenesses of palace rooms, formal gardens or fields for battle' (Michael Hattaway, 2002:12). Nonetheless, the government began to fear the strolling actors: firstly, they could spread plague; and secondly, among the most popular subjects of the plays were stories such as Robin Hood, which the government worried would encourage people to remonstrate against monarchy. As Alois Bejblík claims, already 'in 1533 the crown issued a ban of all interludes concerning all controversial topics. Some moralities satirized Luther and some even cardinal Wolsey' (1979:134, my translation)¹. Eventually, the English government stopped approving of strolling players; and, in 1572, Queen Elizabeth even passed a law banning strolling companies fully, and actually vagrancy in general. The ban, as Bejblík suggests, 'threatened detected vagabonds by whipping and piercing of the right ear, in case of repetition of the offence by death, loss of estate, withholding of a priest and sanctified ground' (1979:136, my translation)², so eventually only companies with formal patronage remained viable. The consequent direct outgrowth of the bans caused the change of amateur companies into the professional ones; 'since 1574 the acting was mentioned in the official documents as workmanship, profession and art' (Bejblík, 1979:142, my translation)³. In the situation when the company gained the formal patronage, the noblemen, whose support the actors had were held responsible for the content of the plays; and logically, it was strictly prohibited to include

any material against the living monarch or the country; however, as the Tudors were such great propagandists, the plays embellishing them were certainly not banned, as will be shown in the case of Queen Elizabeth. Concerning the period bans of the strolling companies, exemplarily, the court itself accommodated to the new establishment, and the amateur courtiers who originally performed the court plays and masques were replaced by professional companies and their plays. A sharer in one of those companies - known as the Lord Chamberlain's company, and after the accession of James I to the English throne, as the King's Men, as the company was given the ruler's personal patronage - was William Shakespeare. Interestingly, even after the law was passed, the various dissensions between actors and officials continued, and eventually, after the actors were basically banished from the City, they strayed to the south of the Thames, where the Mayor's of London authority did not reach, and started building the first permanent playhouses. G.B.Harrison notes:

In the 1570's the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London and the players were constantly at variance. As a result James Burbage, then the leader of the great Earl of Leicester's players, decided that he would erect a playhouse outside the jurisdiction of the Lord Mayor, where the players would no longer be hindered by the authorities. Accordingly in 1576 he built the Theatre in Shoreditch, at that time a suburb of London. (1965:9)

As 'the Theatre experiment proved to be successful' (Harrison, 1965:9), more playhouses were open in the London area in the following years, including the Curtain playhouse (in 1577), the Rose (in 1587), the Fortune Theatre (in 1600) and also, the presently most famous, certainly because it was built by the company in which Shakespeare, popular already at the Elizabethan period, was a one tenth shareholder, the Globe (in 1599).

1.1.2. Playhouse building and staging

Although the theatre companies became professionalized, the newly constructed Elizabethan playhouses still did not offer satisfactory conditions for splendid stage design. It is not difficult to imagine the reasons, as sketches (see appendix 2) and pictures of the theatres still exist, as does one of the theatres, at least as a hypothetical reproduction. Although the present Globe in London is only a copy, it resembles the original Globe which was in use until 1613 when the roof caught fire during one of the performances and the building burned to the ground. The news of Globe burning down spreaded in London and the event is possible to trace from some period records. Sir Henry Wotton, for instance, portrayed it in a letter to his cousin, remarking that:

When King Henry entered the house of cardinal Wolsey [...] a few cannons fired fusillade, [and] one paper [...] was projected on the thatched roof. At first it only seemed as some harmless smoke and people kept watching the spectacle on the stage with attention. Then the inner part caught fire and everything started up as a comet, so the whole house burnt to the ground in less than half an hour. (Bejblík, 1979:179, my translation)⁴

From the history retrieve, it is possible to say that all the playhouses were usually circular or hexagonal, with a place for musicians, since songs and music were inseparable elements of most plays. The whole yard was open to the air, so that light would be allowed in, which meant that, naturally, performances were held in the afternoon, because there was no artificial lighting. There was no curtain concealing the whole stage either, so all scenes began with an entrance and ended with an exit of the characters. As mentioned above, there was no scenery, which may seem incomprehensible to present viewers who are used to vast change in scenery within a play, or sometimes even within separate acts and scenes. However, the possibility of extensive scenery change flourished only after the use of modern technologies, and certainly use of artificial lightning, which enables the quick scenery transformation without disruptive interruption of the play. None of these though were available in the two considered periods, and so the scenery was limited. Nonetheless, this situation appears advantageous in a way, as therefore the playwrights were not limited by the number of scenes. If the placement of the scene was somehow important for the play, it was evoked in dialogue. It is also unclear how actors were dressed, but 'it seems most likely that basic costumes were Elizabethan with some token costumes – long medieval shoes, for example – to mark historical difference' (Michael Hattway, 2002:12).

The little space for illusions though did not discourage the audience; the interest in theatre was truly enormous. Joy Hancox asserts that, 'by 1595 over 15,000 people a week were attending plays being performed in London theatres' (internet source). Such an amount of theatre goers meant a great need for space: yet, it was not a problem in Elizabethan London. There were enough playhouses in the London area, and each could hold several thousand people; 'due to de Witt's entry from 1596 the Swan theatre could hold up to three thousand seated spectators' (Bejblík, 1979:210, my translation)⁵. Most spectators though, who viewed the performance standing for only a penny admission, surrounded the stage from three sides. If the viewers had paid 'the amount from six pence to one shilling' they could sit down 'either on the stage, or in galleries, that were as a reminiscence of the original inns divided into small rooms, and from that the present loge probably emerged' (André Maurois, 1993:226, my translation)⁶. It is evident that the same playhouse held the people from

different social background. Alexander Leggatt asserts that 'public playhouses catered to a mixed audience', if nothing else, 'the price structure would suggest' that (1992, internet source). Despite the little staging the playhouses were apparently suitable for the audience, and however little space was used for illusions, many symbols conveying or illuminating the meaning of the play were used. As Michael Hattaway writes: 'Courts were represented not with painted scenery but by appropriate varieties of theatrical ritual: processions, music, formal speech' (2002:12), which may occasionally be a bit problematic for present theatre goers, who are not aware of such rituals; truly, some rituals or even hidden religious or political remarks are hardly understandable and traceable for a non-Elizabethan viewer.

Nonetheless, if the scene design was, as has been suggested, not greatly important in the Elizabethan playhouses, this cannot be asserted in the case of the Jacobean court. After the accession of James I to the English throne, a new generation of artists also appeared, a generation partly formed because of James's theatrical taste. The most important of these being Indigo Jones, an architect, sculptor, painter, and in words of Martin Kovář 'eager promoter of Italian cultural tradition [...] stood out fully only after the accession of Stuarts' (2001:52, my translation)⁷. English masques became very popular. As D.M.Bergeron writes, although 'scattered examples of indoor *court masque* exist in the Tudor era, masques truly become a fixture in the Stuart court' (2002:42). This interest in masques was also caused partly because members of the court acted in them. It is even said that 'in 1609 Queen Anne herself, accompanied by six countesses and five maids, acted in the masque called *Masque of Queen*' (Kovář, 2001:53, my translation)⁸. Partly because 'masques included dazzling technical effects, dance, and music (Bergeron, 2002:42), these performances, contrary to the Elizabethan stage, required authors to be 'concentrated mainly on the most imaginative construction of the scene, stage setting and costumes' (Kovář, 2001:52, my translation)⁹. Ben Jonson, one of the most popular authors of masques, and his contemporaries cooperated 'with England's most distinguished architect, Indigo Jones, in designing the increasingly elaborate staging on which court spent vast sums of money' (Bergeron, 2002:42). This certainly does not imply that Shakespeare and his contemporaries lost their position in the Jacobean theatre world: however, changes and developments in stage design influenced some of their plays. Nonetheless, more influential than any of these technicalities of the theatre was the changing form of the theatre plays produced at that time.

1.2. Elizabethan and Jacobean playwriting

1.2.1. Influential theatre forms, rituals and symbols

In general, Elizabethan as well as Jacobean plays, not only those of Shakespeare, were more or less influenced by the tradition from which they had arisen, by the sources of information on which they were based, and also by the current political situation in which they were written. While scholars have disagreed about the direct influence of Seneca on Elizabethan drama, Janis Lull points out that

certainly Elizabethan revenge tragedy shares many conventions with the plays of Seneca, including, as James E. Ruoff lists them, 'the revenge theme, the ghosts, the play-within-the play, the dumb show, the soliloquy, the declaration and bombast, the emphasis on macabre brutalities, insanity and suicide'. (1999:8)

One can really trace all of these in Elizabethan plays: elaborate speeches, violence and horror onstage, characters who are dominated by a single, obsessive passion, or an interest in the supernatural. Yet, prior English dramatic forms, such as mystery and morality plays, also contributed their influence to the plays of the Elizabethan period. The playwrights had to, at least partly, adjust the plays to the expectations of their audience that 'was used to places changing and action onstage from the mystery plays' (Michael Best, 1998, internet source). At the same time, the leading and most popular character of most morality plays was Vice, who played tricks on the Virtues and other Vices alike. Vice took up most of the stage time, and often ended by fighting with the other Vices and was banished to Hell at the end of the play. According to Lull, Vice, in its changed form, could be seen onstage even in the plays of Elizabethan authors. Lull explains that 'to the delight of spectators, the Vice would introduce himself and his schemes directly' at the beginning of the performance. The same can actually be seen, for example, in *Richard III*, where Richard in his first soliloquy explains that he is 'determined to prove a villain', then continues by explaining his plans, and, of course, is then 'doomed to Hell' (1999:8) at the end of the play.

Other very common characters in Elizabethan plays are women able to prophesy. Looking at the plays carefully, if the prophesying women are present onstage, there is always a group of three in some shape. According to Lull, 'the prophesying women in the play have links to characters in both classical and English drama' (1999:9). The group of three women either suggests the tradition of

the Resurrection plays, specifically the motif of the three Marys – Mary Magdalene, Mary Salome and Mary the mother of James – at the tomb of Jesus. The three Marys formed part of the native theatrical heritage for playwrights and playgoers of Shakespeare's generation. (1999:9)

Or they can 'be compared to (...) Helena, Andromache and Hecuba in Seneca's *Troades*' (1999:9). Taking into account *Richard III*, there are three women - the Dutchess,

Elizabeth and Anne - and three witches appear in *Macbeth*. Moreover, the Elizabethan period was influenced by Calvinism and its 'emphasis on predestination', so 'these associations must have suggested' that the prophesying 'women in the play are not only on the side of right, but also on the side of destiny' (Lull, 1999:10).

Besides that, some other symbols and rituals were used, such as the colours: as stated in Martin Kovář's *Stuartovská Anglie*, colours were especially important for Jacobean masques. Kovář asserts that 'Jones and his colleagues paid great attention to the choice of colours' (2001:53, my translation)¹⁰, and in his book continues by explaining the symbolic meaning of the colours that were used. Other symbolical meanings were included in the symbol of the sun or shadow, sounds coming from the north side (believed to be the devil's side), the hooting of the owl, the demonic bird, or other animals, evoking various symbolism such as 'lambs evoking physical deformity, a boar, a loathsome symbol of savagery and demonic forces, or a hog, a beast that stands for impurity and lechery' (Besnault, Bitot, 2002:111-112). Characters were, in the words of Micheal Hattway, often depicted as 'the totally unscrupulous bogeymen' (2002:8) who were based on the Machiavelan tradition. 'Machiavel', as Hattway claims further,

derives from Protestant writing against Italianate vice rather than from any real comprehension of the writings of Niccoló Machiavelli who lived well after the death of Henry VI. (2002:8)

All these symbols, rituals and symbolic characteristics of figures in the plays were certainly employed, partly because of the theatre tradition created over the years, and as the way of adjusting scenes in Elizabethan plays instead of scenery. It probably also indicated to the audience the way in which they could expect the plot and the characters to develop.

1.2.2. History plays

However great the influence of Calvinism, and various symbols, Senecan tragedy was also influential, as Hattway suggests: 'The earlier plays owe as much to Seneca as to the chronicles of English history' (2002:8). Indeed English drama before the sixteenth century often dramatized biblical stories or lives of the saints, and the battle between human's virtues and vices was at the centre of attention. English histories, which became very popular in the Elizabethan period, were narratives usually centring around the reign of a monarch, and ending by their death. Clearly enough, the Elizabethan histories cannot be viewed from the present perspective. Most of the people in the Elizabethan period were uneducated, or had only a basic education from the 'petty' schools. 'By the end of the sixteenth century, about

one third of the male population and only one tenth of the female, most originating from the aristocracy or the arising middle class, could read' (Michael Best, 1998, internet source). Nonetheless, even if they were literate, it was impossible for a common person to borrow a history book from a private library, open it and find exact historical dates, facts, or personalities, which meant that the playwright could, as Hattway certifies, 'count on a minimal knowledge of historical events in his audience and he represented these in various ways' (2002:7). Although Hattway is probably correct an author's benevolent changes of history were more likely caused by the chronicles of English history that were available at that time, and partly by playwright's choice of the historical topic and its careful handling, as none wanted to fall into disgrace before the nobility or even the monarch.

Indeed, handling the topic carefully was one of the most important skills for the playwright. Historywise, deliberation was significant, as 'the ban on portraying living monarchs' (Hoenselaars, 2002:29) existed and the ruler would certainly not tolerate any assault of their family members or any predecessors either. However vigilant though, the playwrights sometimes offended their ruler. In 1604, for example, even the King's Men 'had come a cropper, when a play about the Gowry conspiracy had given offence; but Gowry was recent history, in which James had been personally involved' (Peter Thomson, 1983:137). Yet, in the same way, as including a living monarch in a play was perilous, 'not to perform something in which' the monarch 'might see his own reflection could have been viewed as a sin of omission' (Thomson 1983:137). The choice was extremely problematic and that is probably one of the reasons, for Shakespeare's decision to, 'with the exception of *Henry VIII*, cover the history [that] invariably antedates 1485' (Hoenselaars, 2002:29). Many of Shakespeare's contemporaries though 'continued beyond the end of the Wars of the Roses, and they developed a wide variety of plays using materials bearing on the more recent Tudor era' (Hoenselaars, 2002:29). Some of them, 'as a partial consequence of their readiness to exploit Tudor history', Hoenselaars writes further, 'developed the biographical history plays'. The biographical plays, as David Loades in his article 'The Early Reception' explains, 'usually picked the life of 'non-royal figure, drawing on John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, popular collection of lives of those who died as martyrs' (internet source). In 1603, after the death of Elizabeth I, Thomas Heywood produced a two part play about her life called *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*. The play offended none, as the Tudor dynasty was replaced by the Stuarts and actually, as Hoenselaars claims, the play 'remained highly popular on the London stage until the closing of the theatres in 1642' (2002:29). Other of many Foxean plays was written by Thomas Drue in 1624, just one year before James I's death:

however, contrary to the Heywood's plays, this one criticized the monarch himself, although it is not clear if it had offended him. *Dutchess of Suffolk* narrated the life of the Katherine of Suffolk who was forced to leave England and was allowed to return from exile only after accession of Elizabeth I to the throne. Hoenselaars explains that in this case

Tudor history really served as a veiled criticism of King James's prevaricating attitude toward his own daughter, Elizabeth Stuart, who, together with her husband, the Count Palatine, was left to her own devices amidst the political turmoil that engulfed Germany and Bohemia. (2002:30)

However, not all the playwrights approved of this rather assaultive genre, and wrote, among other things, the historical plays. Hoenselaars claims that 'with these varying biographical forms Shakespeare seems to have had little sympathy. He only had a hand in *Sir Thomas More*, but a corrective one' (2002:30).

Beside the difficulty with not offending the monarchs, the problem of historical plays was that the chronicles from which playwrights could acquire information about English history were limited and very often unreliable. H.J.C.Grierson and Dominique Goy-Blanquet consider about five main sources of English history that could get to the hands of the Elizabethan playwrights; Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia* (first version completed in 1513, polished version in 1534), Edward Hall's *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of York and Lancaster* (1548), Raphael Holinshed's *The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1577), Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1136), and Thomas More's unfinished biography of Richard III called *The History of King Richard III* (written between 1513-1521). Although they all were widely used as the source of history, with the present knowledge it can be certainly said that they are often based only on a pure opinion of the author, obedient to the Tudor dynasty that was ruling at the time when these chronicles were written and as Grierson suggests, in some cases 'not only mythical but fictitious' (1914:xiii). Historical truth was, in the Elizabethan period, not always a priority, but it is the fact that history itself, truthful or untruthful, started to be very important after the accession of Tudors. Henry VII, the first Tudor monarch, was, according to Goy-Blanquet, 'the first English monarch who used history on a grand national scale to legitimise his accession to power'. For his purpose, he used 'a family tree inspired by Geoffrey of Monmouth' (2002:62), the chronicles available at the time. The family tree was vital for Henry VII, as 'he needed to substantiate his rightful entitlement for the English crown' (Bejblík, 1979:65, my translation)¹¹. This was nothing exceptional though, many families have their family trees invented at the time and Henry VII has his tree deduced beginning with King Arthur.

Also the whole forthcoming period of Tudor's reign became suitable for formation of new chronicles. Henry VII, for example, deserved 'to be hailed as a father of Tudor historiography' (D. Goy-Blanquet, 2002:62), because, after using history as an evidence of his right to the English throne, he also asked Vergil to write new English chronicles. Goy-Blanquet explains that the twenty-seven volume of Vergil's chronicles, had, as they were written by the Italian historian, the advantage of being 'less concerned by the recent partisan quarrels [the Wars of Roses]' than the histories written by Vergil's 'English colleagues' (2002:62). Also, as Vergil was a great historian, these chronicles, that were finished in 1534, are 'the first to use critical judgement, compare sources, and check the veracity of facts' (2002:62). Nonetheless, the version also probably more accessible to the Elizabethan playwrights was the one written by Edward Hall. His work, published in 1548, was 'to a large extent a wordy translation of Vergil's elegant Latin, embellished with extracts from other chronicles and spiced up with his own moral commentaries (2002:63). Hall had a different opinion on English history, as he was a firm Protestant and a devotee of Henry VIII, but as claimed further,

He never quarrels with Vergil's opinions – he simply omits them when they disagree with his own. He is also much less rigorous, seldom embarrassed by the conflict of sources or philosophical systems he appeals to, and frequently suits his ethics to hard facts. (2002:63)

However, although all these sources were possible to use, the chronicles that 'inspired the vogue of the history play' (2002:63) were those written by Raphael Holinshed, re-edited in 1587. Holinshed was influenced by many different sources. The section on Scottish history was based on the Hector Boece's *Historiae Scotorum*, which was written in the Scottish dialect: however, most of those were 'only the invention of Boece and his predecessors anxious to trace the descent of their king' (Grierson, 1914:xiii). For the other sections Holinshed was 'paraphrasing or copying Hall, in other words Vergil, on the York and Lancaster reigns, with heavy cuts of their providential comments' (Goy-Blanquet, 2002:63). Not even More treated the War of Roses differently in his *The History of King Richard III*, which blackened Richard by collecting 'all the direct testimonies he could find, usually from Richard's worst enemies, without the least effort to sift truth from prejudice' (2002:62). Thus, Hattway's claim that the playwright could count on a minimal historical knowledge in the audience, and so represent it in various ways, cannot be accepted without objections. After all, the facts show that even conception of the playwrights having a slight prospect of creating something historically accurate and politically uneffected, even if they wanted to, would be a

misconception. They followed mostly the historians' works, and it is doubtful whether the historians had much choice and desire to explain history in an accurate way.

1.2.3. Elizabethan playwrights

Apparently, for Elizabethans all these problems were not so problematic, since the actors, plays and playwrights proliferated and playwriting became a relatively profitable job, as seen in Bejblík:

Edward Howes in the insertion to Stow's *Annals* wrote: 'Comedians and actors used to be very poor and uncouth compared to the ones from our time. Now though they became very rich and they are great actors in all subjects, so various aristocrats took them for their servants'. (1979:143, my translation)¹²

And Bejblík continues that playwrights 'were earning seventimes to tentimes more than the average craftsman (...) or well-situated teachers with completed university education' (1979:162, my translation)¹³. Writing apparently became a great craft, however, with a great number of playhouses and playwrights, and also with the preference of some playwrights by their monarchs, naturally competition appeared. There was a group of so called 'university wits'; and, although they certainly did not always work together, since they had acquired an education at either Oxford or Cambridge they looked down on their contemporaries who lacked such an education. Even nowadays, as suggested by L.B.Wright, the lack of university education is used by the anti-Shakespeareans to prove that this 'unlettered yokel without any schooling' could not have written the plays. For them the playwright had to be 'a noble lord or the equivalent in background who had a very good education'. Nevertheless, it is known that Shakespeare 'had a very good education, acquired in the Stratford Grammar School', and Wright ends his Shakespeare defence:

Most anti-Shakespeareans are naive and betray an obvious snobbery. The author of their favourite plays, they imply, must have had a college diploma framed and hung on his study wall like the one in their dentist's office. [...] They forget that genius has a way of cropping up in unexpected places and that none of the great writers [...] got his inspiration in a college or university course. (1960:xxxiii)

Moreover, since the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods are being considered here, neither this intellectuality nor rivalry can be perceived from our present point of view, for education, during the period, was no test of civility. The Cambridge graduate Christopher Marlowe, for example, considered by some literarywise superior to uneducated Shakespeare, was killed young in a tavern quarrel; Ben Jonson killed two actor in a duel. Further, in spite of

Shakespeare not having the university education, Harold Bloom and most critics assert that Shakespeare proved to be the best playwright of the Elizabethan period, perhaps of all times:

Are there personalities (in our sense) in the plays of any Shakespeare's rivals? Marlowe deliberately kept to cartoons, even in *Barabas* [...], and Ben Jonson as deliberately confined himself to ideograms, even in *Volpone* [...]. I have a great taste for John Webster, but his heroines and villains alike vanish when juxtaposed to those of Shakespeare. (1998:5)

Yet, for Bloom Shakespeare does not win the primacy only as the best Elizabethan playwright, for him Shakespeare holds the pre-eminence in the whole history of human race. He explains that all characters before Shakespeare were basically unchanging, as they were 'represented as ageing and dying, but not as changing because their relationship to themselves, rather than to the gods or God, has changed' (1998:xvii). Bloom further claims that it was the great Shakespeare who created personalities, in our present sense, because 'in Shakespeare, characters develop rather than unfold, and they develop because they reconceive themselves' (1998:xvii), Bloom even suggesting that other characters since Shakespeare were created 'by an imitation of Shakespeare' (1998:6). The eighteenth-century titan Samuel Johnson supports this view by declaring that 'we owe Shakespeare everything'. Bloom adds that it was Shakespeare who has taught us to understand human nature. Some scholars might oppose Bloom's theory, a theory he practically borrows from Johnson, however, if nothing else, Shakespeare has proved to be exceptional if only by remaining onstage for more than four hundred years, even at times when the enormous interest in the theatre has decreased exceedingly.

Shakespeare proved his brilliance even to his immediate contemporaries. In the autumn of 1592, Robert Greene, the best known of the professional writers, as he was dying, wrote a letter to his fellow writers in which he warned them against the ingratitude of players in general, and in particular against an 'upstart crow' who 'supposes he is as much able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and being an absolute Johannes Factotum is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country.' As confirmed by G. B. Harrison, 'this is the first reference to Shakespeare, and the whole passage suggests that he had become suddenly famous as a playwright and was recognized as the greatest of English dramatists by the summer of 1598' (1998:6). He was so popular that Francis Meres, in his *Palladis Tamia: Wits Treasury*, referred to him in flattering terms as 'mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare,' observing further that 'as Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage'. Meres concluded with the remark that 'the Muses would

speaking with Shakespeare's fine phrase if they would speak English.' Words of praise also appear in the works of dramatists who may presently be considered Shakespeare's rivals. For example, supposedly his greatest rival, Ben Jonson, wrote a poem after Shakespeare's death called *To the Memory of My Beloved Master William Shakespeare and What He Hath Left Us*, in which he portrays Shakespeare as a great artist. He writes:

To draw no envy, SHAKSPEARE, on thy name,
Am I thus ample to thy book and fame ;
While I confess thy writings to be such,
As neither Man nor Muse can praise too much.
[...]
He was not of an age, but for all time !
[...]
Sweet Swan of Avon ! what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appear,
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,
That so did take Eliza, and our James !

These words undoubtedly express the great appraisal and respect that William Shakespeare gained during his life.

Nowadays, it may be surprising that a rival writes such appreciative words about another; however, as mentioned above, authors at that time had a very different perception of rivalry. Rivalry, for them, was not a competition, it was actually a kind of 'raillery'. Playwrights did not try to be original in the present sense, but often took each other's work and tried to rewrite it in a different way. They also often cooperated on various projects; or, if employed as actors as well, acted in each other's pieces. William Shakespeare, for example, acted in Jonson's second known play *Every Man in His Humour*, which was performed in Globe by the Lord Chamberlain's Men. So, it should not be surprising that dramatists who are now considered rivals were, in reality, friends. Jonson's poem, then, shows a good example of this 'rivalry friendship'; as a great dramatist, Ben Jonson, praises another, in this case William Shakespeare.

As the great dramatist and an actor at that time, Shakespeare was not only appreciated by his literary contemporaries, for many of his plays were performed in front of the royal court, either for Queen Elizabeth or later for James I. Despite his obvious popularity during Elizabethan and Jacobean times, there are still some who doubt that Shakespeare is the author of the plays that bear his name. Much has been written about this issue, however,

no credible evidence that would stand up in a court of law has ever been adduced to prove either that Shakespeare did not write his plays or that anyone else wrote them.(Wright, 1960:xvii)

Part of the Shakespearean authorship argument lies in the fact that many of his plots, themes and characters arise out of other writer's works; for example, Shakespeare's *Richard III* (dated probably 1593) is based on Thomas More's tragedy *The History of King Richard the Third*, written between 1513-1521; yet, the Elizabethan period also had, apart from a different perception of rivalry, a completely different measure for what was regarded as original. Novelty in a work was judged by its mastery of its theme not by its unusualness. In spite of being based on More's work, still 'with *Richard III* Shakespeare captured the imagination of the Elizabethan audience, then enormously interested in historical plays'. (Wright, 1960:xxiii)

Nonetheless, Shakespeare's exceptionality also lies elsewhere. Michael Hattway asks an unforeseen question, 'Who else [than Shakespeare] had written 'history plays'? (2002:6). The question seems to be answerable in a very easy way: with the increasing importance of history and the theatre goes' enormous interest in it, one would suppose that every playwright was writing history plays to satisfy their audience. However, the answer is definitely not so simple and the question is by all means worth contemplating. Even the seemingly simple, distinction between a history play and a tragedy has always been difficult to define, as is revealed by Hattaway: 'For generations it was common to regard the union of 'history' and 'tragedy' as an uneasy one' (2002:3). He explains that

generic classification was bound to be difficult given that most of the English histories centre their action on the reign of a monarch, the narrative ending with his death. It was therefore inevitable that 'history' plays were going to be closely affiliated with 'tragedy'. Some were initially labelled as such.'(2002:3)

Presently, for example, *Richard III* is classified as a history play; however, when the play was published as part of the First Folio (the first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays published after his death) the two editors, John Heminges and Henry Condell, released the play under the title *The Tragedy of Richard the Third: with the Landing of Earl Richmond, and the Battle at Bosworth Field* (Hattway, 2002:3), and the same actually happened in the Quarto with another presently classified, as a history play, *Richard II*. It can be doubted though that anyone in the Elizabethan period thought much about the distinction between these two genres, especially as they are very close and the distinction not really definite, even nowadays. *Macbeth* can be seen as a good example of this discrepancy. Unlike *Richard III*, and actually all the plays covering the discord of the Lancastrians and the Yorkists that

are labelled as history plays, *Macbeth* is classified as a tragedy. Certainly *Macbeth* has nothing in common with the famous dispute of the two dynasties; however, this play also covers a part of the history - the Scottish history of the eleventh century - and so, quite logically, it should not really be labelled a tragedy but a history play. Hattway's question is indisputably legitimate; nonetheless, one should probably not ask 'Who else had written history plays', but who else had written about the War of the Roses. Even with the refined question, though the answer remains the same, none of the Elizabethan or Jacobean playwrights had dramatized so many 'chronicles' accounts of the War of the Roses (...) and to the persistent conflict between England and France during the Hundred Years War' (Hattaway, 2002:7) as Shakespeare himself. Richard Helgerson agrees, claiming that beyond doubt 'Shakespeare did make a larger contribution to that genre than anyone else' (1977:25). Thus, although many of Shakespeare's plays are actually based on the works of others, this fact did not apparently lessen his craft in the eyes of the Elizabethan and Jacobean viewer, and it would also be very unlikely, as many other playwrights at the time practised exactly the same. Nonetheless, not everyone was able to 'offer spectators and readers an opportunity to learn a significant part of English history' (D.M.Bergeron, 2002:41).

Moreover, Shakespeare not only captured the imagination of the average viewer - in the words of Wright, he also 'gave a [historical] interpretation pleasing to the Tudors' (1960:xxi), and subsequently to the Stuarts. As demonstrated above, Shakespeare was not keen on biographical history plays, and even his choice of topics and time period, he did not use history succeeding the War of the Roses, was rather vigilant. In spite of Shakespeare's circumspect choice of the time period, all the material in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period was necessary to treat cautiously, as history could always be connected with monarchs' predecessors, as in the case of *Richard III*, or legendary founders of the dynasties, as in *Macbeth*. Shakespeare was certainly aware of this, as he sometimes even changed the chronicle material in order not to offend the monarch. There are some scholars Hattway who claims that 'Shakespeare may have provoked rather than please those who would control the political culture of England' (2002:15). The basic argument lies in the letter that

on 12 November 1589 the Privy Council wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Mayor of London, and Edmund Tilney, Master of Revels, asking them each to appoint someone to scrutinise all plays performed in and about the City of London because the players had taken 'upon them, without judgement or decorum, to handle matters of divinity and state'. Parts of the Henry VI plays reveal evidence of censorship by Tilney - or of self-censorship by the players. (2002:15)

Firstly, it might be true, however, *Henry VI* is one of Shakespeare's early plays; and secondly, this provocation certainly does not appear in either *Richard III* or *Macbeth*. In these two plays the situation is quite contrary: the material that was used for these two play was chosen and adjusted so as not to provoke but to please.

2. Richard III

Although being one of his earliest plays, *Richard III* brought William Shakespeare great success. This can be contributed to Shakespeare's remarkably good choice of the topic and in the exceptionally good timing. *Richard III* was written at the time when the Tudors had been rulling the country for over a century, which brought long-wished-for peace and stability. The Tudor period may seem relatively peaceful and stable to a twenty-first century person who cannot really judge 'the outset of order, firm reign and gradual material and spiritual development' (Stříbrný, 1965:8, my translation)¹⁴ that came with the Tudors' reign. Certainly many parts of life had changed, one of the greatest being drama, which changed its shape completely; and, owing to Shakespeare and his contemporaries, became an inseperable part of culture in the forthcoming centuries. Among all of Shakespeare's plays written in the Tudor period, *Richard III* does not enchant many present scholars, who regard the play to be only a starting point in the development of Shakespeare's subsequent greatness. Yet, by the characterization of Richard III in the play, Shakespeare changed the character widely used until the moment when this great antagonist appeared. Although pictured as a colossal villain, Richard remains credibly human throughout the whole play; human, however, only to an extent not to offend the members of the Tudor dynasty, which, with a bit of exaggeration, is the malefactor causing both Richards, the real and literary, to be viewed as monstrous creatures.

2.1. The influence of the Tudor dynasty

This chapter mainly covers the material that was created in the Tudor period in pursuit of stabilizing Henry VII on the English throne. Henry VII certainly needed to support his claim to the crown, a claim which will be confronted with the a situation similar to which arose after the dethroning of Richard II almost a century before Henry VII killed Richard III. This chapter will also show Henry's incredible propagandistic skills, and their uses. Extra space will be given to the histories that began to be written during his reign, leading namely to Vergil's and More's work, as they have been, unlike the others, considered the most credible evidence of the period preceding the Tudor. This all is, of course, dealt with as background for Shakespeare's play.

2.1.1. *Richard III* - dating and choice of material

Richard III was written during the reign of the fifth monarch of the Tudor dynasty, Queen Elizabeth; and, by this play, the whole historical cycle, beginning with the trilogy *Henry VI*, was completed. At the time the play was put on stage, the Tudor dynasty looked anything but secure. An ageing, unmarried female monarch ruled the country, and many people certainly believed that it was only a matter of time before the absence of an heir would once again cause confusion in assession. Shakespeare hardly could have chosen a better time to write his play picturing Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who butchers his way to the throne, murdering everyone standing in his way, including his own brother, wife, and even young nephews, and whose evil plots are staunched only by Henry VII, who, by his triumphant victory, establishes the Tudor dynasty.

The date of the play is uncertain: however, as the last part of the tetralogy, it probably followed the preceding parts quite closely. Louis B. Wright claims that the play 'dates from somewhere between the end of 1592 and the beginning of 1595; perhaps 1593 is about as close as we can come to its first performance' (1960:ix) that was probably at The Theatre, as it was being used by the Lord Chamberlain's Men (Shakespeare's company) at that time. Although various sources date *Richard III* differently, it is certain that the play existed in 1597, as Anthony Hammond in Arden's edition of *Richard III* asserts: it 'was entered on the Stationers' Register by Andrew Wise on 20 October 1597' (2002:1). Nonetheless, the exact date is not vital, as the play certainly emerged during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, and so the influence of the period and the Tudor dynasty, that can be uncovered in the play, would not change within a few years and neither would its popularity, which was partly caused by Shakespeare's choice of a recent history topic - though not recent enough to violate the ban on portraying living monarchs. Hazarding 'chancy' material including Elizabeth and her

contemporaries was unnecessary, as the Wars of Roses - and especially murderous career of Richard III - provided an inexhaustible supply of material that would probably always please the Tudor rulers, since Henry VII, had 'rescued' England from the evil Plantagenet at Bosworth Field in 1485.

2.1.2. Accusation and defence of Richard III

Richard. O monstrous fault, to harbor such a thought! (III.ii. 164)

This exclamation excellently formulates the misconception about Richard III's nature, at least as some have seen it. Like Richard in the third part of Henry VI, some scholars seem to scream, 'What a nonsense! Richard and evil?' - however, it seems that nothing can help blackened Richard III to regain an unbesmirched reputation, because, as Josephine Tey claims, 'you cannot fight Shakespeare and win' (internet source). However, is only Shakespeare to blame for the monstrous picture of Richard III? Shakespeare certainly wrote a play vilifying Richard III: however, his play only stands at the top of the 'pyramid' that began at the accession of Henry VII, who had many motives for blackening his predecessor. Though, voices defending Richard could have been heard, although not in vast number, as early as soon as the beginning of the seventeenth century. As Anthony Hammond clarifies: 'the first author to express hostility towards Shakespeare's interpretation of the last Plantagenet was Sir William Cornwallis' (2002:67) in his *Essayes of Certain Paradoxes* in 1617, which initiated a long running argument between defenders of Richard III (for whom the arch-villain is, of course, King Henry VII) and their opponents. Luis B. Wright, one of the current scholars defending Richard's reputation, claims that 'Henry Tudor had reason to want to blacken Richard's name and damage the claims of all rivals to the throne: his claim was none too strong' (1960:xxvi). Seemingly, 'Henry VII had no stronger claim to the throne than Bolingbroke' (Tony Tanner, 1994:xvii) almost a hundred years before.

In 1399, when Richard II was dethroned, problems with succession had arisen, as it was 'the first time after the death of Richard the Lionheart that the English king stopped reigning without having a son and heir' (Ralph A. Griffiths, 1999:177, my translation)¹⁵. Established custom rightful since 1216 warranted that the succession preference of the oldest male, although it might have meant a child-male-king, as in case of Richard II himself. However, there was no common rule established if this one failed. In 1399, the choice was laid between two blood-line descendants, and thirty-three-year-old Bolingbroke became the

one who gained - or more precisely, seized - the crown then. An almost identical situation arose after the death of Richard III, who died childless, as his only legitimate son and heir (Richard III also had two illegitimate children) died before the Battle of Bosworth. Henry VII though had according to Tony Tanner two great advantages:

He was the only one of the fifteenth century usurpers to kill his childless predecessors in battle. And most importantly, he was supported by the Yorkists who had become disillusioned with the increasingly impossible Richard. (1994:xviii)

It has to be add here, that not all the Yorkists supported the new king; a great part of the north part of the country, for example, was dissatisfied with the new monarch and the way he seized the English crown. Nevertheless, even with the apparent advantages Henry had, contrary to his forerunners, and with the fact that he was so ingenious 'to declare himself the king with the effect from the day preceding the day of the battle' (John Guy, 1999:211, my translation)¹⁶. Still, his claim remained feeble. Louis B. Wright describes the situation:

He was the son of Edmund Tudor and Margaret Beaufort, both of whom were of royal blood. [...] Henry was the grandson of Owen Tudor, a Welsh adventurer who sang his way into the favor of [...] the widow of Henry V. Katherine bore him three sons, of whom Henry's father was the second, but unfortunately they were all born without benefit of clergy. On his mother's side, Henry Tudor was the great-great grandson of John of Gaunt, brother of Edward III, and Katherine Swynford, his entrancing mistress. Though Richard II long ago had made all this legitimate by royal decree and had given the family the name Beaufort, Henry Tudor nevertheless felt uneasy in his pretensions. (1960:xxvi)

To 'legitimize' his claim and secure the position for his own heirs, Henry VII, descendant of Lancasters, married the daughter of King Edward IV, Elizabeth of York, and by this act 'linked the two royal families, white and red rose, whose dispute had been destroying the country for previous thirty years' (Bejblík, 1979:66, my translation)¹⁷. Not only did Henry, by this marriage, connect the two families, but he also 'gave the opportunity to the Yorkists, who joined him in the fight against Richard, to justify their renegadion' (John Guy, 1999:211, my translation)¹⁸. Identically, in the last speech of *Richard III* Richmond declares:

Proclaim a pardon to the soldiers fled
That in submission will return to us;
And then, as we have ta'en the sacrament,
We will unite the white rose and the red. (V.v. 16-19)

Besides, Kovařík asserts that 'Henry VII was an ambitious and rational monarch' (2003:401, my translation)¹⁹: so, although he made all those precautions, and even though, after his marriage to Elizabeth, a successor was born, none of those steps seemed to prevent all the possible assaults from prospective candidates to the English throne. Henry wanted to support

his title to the throne by some written contribution, as he probably did not share the view of Shakespeare's Prince Edward:

But say, my lord, it were not register'd,
Methinks the truth should live from age to age,
As 'twere retail'd to all posterity,
Even to the general all-ending day. (III.iii. 75-78)

2.1.3. The written evidence

Actually, Henry VII might have agreed that the truth might only be transmitted orally, and he surely spread various truths, half-truths, and lies from which he benefitted. However, it certainly holds true that, once written, information gains a totally different dimension. Henry VII definitely did not undermine the power of the written form and 'employed' historians to 'upgrade' the period of Richard III's reign. Domimique Goy-Blanquet emphasizes that 'it is now well known that representations of the last Plantagenet were deliberately distorted by propaganda. It was not enough for a conquering Richmond to inherit the Lancaster claim' (2002:61). His historians were required to do two things: to vilify Richard and to sustain Henry's claim by a family tree tracing his origins back to the legendary king of the Brits, King Arthur, who was regarded, according to Alois Bejblík, as 'the archetype of knighthood and one of nine titans [...], who came to the world as the incarnation of Christ' (1979:66, my translation)²⁰. Some authors even claim that the family tree was traced back as far as the Celtic kings, and beyond them to the first Trojan settlers. The great family tree was invented; however, the greatest invention of Henry VII, and consequently also Henry VIII, was the creation of a monster figure, Richard III.

Nowadays, a majority of authors writing history plays would consult many primary and secondary sources, and do detailed research. However, the approach in the sixteenth century was very different. The aim of sixteenth-century authors' was not to account history events and personalities accurately: 'the real significance', as Martin Hilský claims, 'lay in giving a model of how to live, and in the kings' case how to rule the country' (2004:135, my translation)²¹. In Richard's case, the aim was clear: a monstrous, misshapen king would never lead his country into stability and peace: and, quite logically, this would show the importance of the new monarch and provide Henry with some extra possibilities for stabilizing his own position on the throne, at least in the eyes of English citizens, which was very important. Correspondingly, Richard III's monstrosity was so shrewdly invented and so greatly 'nourished' that the evil picture has persisted among the public for centuries, even

though historians and scholars have fought to vindicate Richard's reputation. Their defending voices though remain feeble compared to the voices of the 'blackeners' whose history glorifying the Tudors created the generally accepted view of the fifteenth and sixteenth century. The greatest merit of this situation is attributed to Shakespeare; but, it should be remembered that, in his *Richard III*, he simply used the available sources (see chapter 1.3.2), which, as suggested in the introductory part, cannot be considered reliable sources of history. John Julius Norwich insinuates that Polydore Vergil, who was invited to write new English histories in 1501, and who arrived in England only in 1502, 'tells us that he personally interviewed "every elderly man pointed out to [him] as having once held an important position in public life" (1999:357). Assuredly, he could have heard stories of a cruel, pitiless monarch, as his 'villainous portrait [...] had been developing since Richard's own time'; nonetheless, it can only be speculated where the truth ended and gradually gained 'characteristics that critics would later associate with the Tudor Myth' (Janis Lull, 1999:6), since Vergil began writing his histories only about twenty years after Richard's defeat. The same applies for Thomas More, who witnessed the reign of Richard III himself (which has always been the main reason why his work has been given such wide acceptance), and who demolished Richard in his *The History of King Richard III*, the history that inspired Shakespeare's play. However, there are some factors that probably influenced More's blackening work. It has to be remembered that he 'grew up in the household of Cardinal John Morton, one of the councillors of Henry VII and a sworn enemy of Richard III' (Sharon D. Michalove, 1995); furthermore, More was only seven years old at the time of the battle of Bosworth field. Hence, his period evidence was also based on interviews with Richard's contemporaries, not on his own experience. It can be believed though that 'he certainly knew many [of Richard's contemporaries]'. Moreover, as J.J.Norwich continues, his 'own father, a leading London lawyer, would have been able to give him first-hand evidence in plenty of what had really occurred in that short and disastrous reign' (1999:357). Clearly, More's evidence came from the second hand just as Vergil's. Besides, these histories were written during the Tudor period, so no one wanted to fall into disgrace; and, most importantly, since the priority was not real history, but a kind of a lesson, the memories of the fearful years of the War of Roses, and the hope that Henry VII had brought meant that no one, probably had difficulties to write or believe these assaults on the preceding period - and so, on the last ruling monarch, Richard III.

Basically it would be possible to continue in the same way with all the sources used by Shakespeare to write *Richard III*; and generally, Tudors history is nowadays viewed as

based mainly on various legends, myths and rumours that were at least partly influenced by the initiation of historiography during the Tudor period and also due to their political propaganda, not necessarily caused by the hatred to the last Plantagenet (maybe by the hatred of the interwied witnesses), but by the necessity of the situation in which Henry VII appeared. And, as explained, who would be easier to vilify than the last monarch of a long war-period ruining the country? Nevertheless, viewed in a historical context, Richard III seems to be quite the opposite of the theatre character, which again questions the truthfulness of the witnesses, and consequently the chronicles, however this topic should be dealt with in detail later.

2.2. Elizabethan influence in the play

As Elizabethan staging has specific qualities, the first chapter once again mentions the design and staging that were used in the period; however, the main purpose is to show how Shakespeare was influenced by the original theatre forms – specifically in staging, use of properties, and choice of characters. The second part is devoted to Queen Elizabeth, as *Richard III* was written and performed during her reign. Attention is aimed at her role of the female-illegitimate but still brilliant Tudor monarch, who was able to enhance her country and enable the boom in various aspects, specifically cultural, of the English people.

2.2.1. Staging and Elizabethan theatre groups

All Shakespeare's early plays were designed to be performed in inns, courtyards, and mostly in public playhouses that could hold large audience. As stated heretofore, the openair playhouses were not adapted for splendid stage design and 'only the sorts of properties the actors themselves could carry on and off the stage' (Lull, 1999:102) were used. The advantage, of course, was that the lack of staging enabled Shakespeare to shift the play from one location to another very flexibly, so to get from the king's palace to the Tower or the battle field in just two scenes caused no problems. However, it was necessary then to allude to the change in the dialogue. In the third scene of *Richard III*, for example, Buckingham welcomes Prince Edward by the words: 'Welcome, sweet Prince, to London, to your chamber.' (III.i.1) to evoke the place of their meeting, and so evidently the properties and staging were not really necessary. Besides, Lull suggests that Elizabethan audience was used to 'the generalised settings and fast-paced dialogue', and so all this 'was very well received' (2002:103/4). This is not surprising since, only a century before no playhouses

existed at all, and people were used to performances not only in inns and courtyards but even, for example, on waggons. Hence, they certainly did not expect great stage setting. In addition to that, Elizabethan authors and viewers alike regarded theatre as similar to real life: for them, the action proceeding on the stage did not represent only the pure illusion bolstered by the staging, properties, and costumes, for the Elizabethans the stage imitated real life, as Bejblík asserts:

In life, literature and the whole drama of the Shakespeare period alike, the conception of similarity between theatre and life was firmly established; this conception became a part of period language and thinking. Theatre as microcosmos in macrocosmos appeared as something logical and natural. (1979:125, my translation)²²

Logically, in real life the placement and clothes are usually not as important as the action itself, and this simply held true in the case of the Elizabethan theatre.

As with the staging, the theatrical forms in the Elizabethan period continued in the tradition created by the companies of strolling players that were discussed earlier. The main structure of the most folk plays formed singing, dance, and, as Bejblík asserts, also something 'that was even at the Shakespeare period called 'mumming', which was performing in masks' (1979:129, my translation)²³. These plays were the first experience that people often had with theatre; but, as Bejblík continues, 'the real school of the theatre art became the religious, biblical plays' (1979:130, my translation)²⁴. Those plays usually took a few days and some of them had as many as 'three hundred actors in five hundred roles' (1979:131, my translation)²⁵. The theatre companies then, if one can actually use the word 'company', had only a few actors in the stable cast of each group, the other parts were usually acted by various servants from the region, or one actor acted in more roles in one play. In 1473 Sir John Paston wrote a letter saying that 'he sustained a servant because he had proved worth in roles of saint George, Robin Hood, and also sheriff of Nottingham' (1979:132, my translation)²⁶, and makes apparent how extremely disappointed he was when this servant left his residence.

Shakespeare was certainly influenced by traditional forms, so it should not be surprising that *Richard III* is one of the longest of Shakespeare's plays, with almost 3,600 dialogue lines and a vast number of actors needed. As confirmed by Hammond, the play 'must inevitably have been difficult to cast. (...) There are altogether fifty-two speaking parts, three more named but mute parts, and an indefinite number of supernumeraries required' (2002:62). However, as he further suggests, there is a likely possibility that the

roles would be doubled, as even the largest Elizabethan company would have had problems to cast all the roles:

We can probably assume that the players of Richard and Buckingham would not have doubled: their parts are too long, and they are too much in the audience's eye to do so convincingly. (2002:63)

Hammond argues further that, 'while [the play] is expensive in terms of manpower, it is otherwise suitable for a touring production, [as] the only necessary properties seem to be a pair of tents' (2002:65). Shakespeare certainly distinguished between things that were possible and impossible to realize, and his *Richard III*, as one of his earliest plays; clearly follows the influence of the preceding theatrical forms, and probably also the influence of his monarch is probably also traceable in it.

2.2.2. Queen Elizabeth

Margaret: I had rather be a country servant maid,
Than a great queen, with this condition,
To be so baited, scorn'd, and storm'd at:
Small joy have I in being England's queen. (I.iii. 107-110)

It is not clear if Queen Elizabeth would have complained in the same way as Queen Margaret in *Richard III*; however, she definitely did not have an easy life, and so Shakespeare might have included this line into the play intentionally for her ears.

When the Queen ascended to the throne in 1558, she quickly realized that she had inherited a poor country quite devastated by the religious instability of the previous years. The Queen's own status appeared equally disheartening. Much of Europe regarded her as the illegitimate child of King Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn, since the Pope had not sanctioned Henry's divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. As a "bastard", Elizabeth had no right to ascend the English throne. The same situation had actually arisen after the death of Richard III, as his two illegitimate children remained alive. However, Henry VII, aware of the situation, married off Richard's daughter and imprisoned his son. Although the son, or someone who claimed to be Richard's son, appeared and was subsequently crowned in Ireland, Henry continued to secure his and his heirs' positions. 'Elizabeth, of course, was confident that it was she who ruled', and she claimed that 'God,

he only, had [...] made her Queen' (Oxford Dictionary). Nonetheless, Elizabeth 'illegitimacy' proved not to be the only problem. A more serious problem was posed by her gender.

A woman's role in the sixteenth century was quite distinct: they got married, and their main responsibility was 'to manage households, but they were excluded from the public offices' (Oxford Dictionary). They, moreover, had no right to inherit after their fathers – this, logically, did not hold true in the case of the crown, yet women were not usually considered full-bodied rulers: 'The Scottish reformer John Knox asserted that the 'imbecility' of their sex rendered women unfit to bear rule' (Oxford Dictionary). Thus,

it was not only Knox who believed a female ruler to be, if not an unnatural monstrosity, an unusual and in principle undesirable exception to the regular rule governing human affairs. Apart from any other considerations, it was not clear that a woman could exercise the oldest function of a monarch, leading her forces into battle. Nor could she, in any station or walk of life, ordinarily exercise the kind of authority associated with the mental powers of a man. (Oxford Dictionary)

Evidently, Elizabeth was not respected automatically; she had to secure her position, not only as a Tudor, but also as a woman who did not accord with the stereotype of women as "brainless". Maurois asserts that

William Cecil displayed great distrust towards Elizabeth after her accession to the throne, as he had only a little respect for a woman's authority. He dared to rebuke an emissary, who turned to her. (1993:206, my translation)²⁷

On another occasion, Cecil was upset 'when a messenger discussed with the queen ambassadorial dispatch, it being too much for a woman's knowledge' (Oxford Dictionary). However, Elizabeth was quite aware of her position, as she was 'a man and a woman alike' (Maurois, 1993:207, my translation)²⁸. Since had also inherited great intellect, she herself confessed, 'I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman', yet in the same breath added, 'but I have the heart and stomach of a king' (Tilbury speech, 1588). Inheriting not only intellect, but also the great Tudor skill at propaganda and politics, she gradually stabilised her position, even though the situation became more complicated, especially since she had decided not to get married.

'Decided' might be perceived as too strong a word; however, Brenda Ralph Lewis claims that 'when she [Elizabeth] and Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, were both about nine years old, she had told him she would never take a husband' (2003:3), which could have been seen as a childish caprice; however, it became reality, and some present authors argue about the reason for the decision. Of course, it might have been the result of her father's attitude and

behaviour to his wives (she clearly had to view marriage as a certain danger, as her mother was executed after being accused of adultery and incest). The others clarify that she did not want to fall under the power of her future husband, as he would have been given the power, and she would have to be subservient to his will and leadership. As B. R. Lewis confirms:

After she became Queen, the dangers of marriage took on another aspect. A husband would not have occupied a secondary position, like Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband, or Prince Philip, who married the second Elizabeth in 1947. At the time of Elizabeth I, the husband of a reigning Queen could claim the Crown Matrimonial and rule as King during her lifetime. In the case of a foreign husband, this meant the one thing Elizabeth's subjects most hated: foreign influence in English affairs. If, on the other hand, she opted to marry an English noble, she would make him an "overmighty subject" with more power than any subject ought to possess. (2003:3)

Naturally, Elizabeth understood that her decision would influence the whole country - however, so did the parliament, who primarily wanted her to bear a future monarch, and so occasionally intervened by asking Elizabeth to get married. Nevertheless, Elizabeth's decision was unchangable; and, on one occasion, she answered: 'I have already joined myself in marriage to a husband, namely the kingdom of England'. This remained her answer throughout her reign, so it became clear that once she died, the country would once be without a direct heir, either male or female. However, as Elizabeth knew how much bad blood was drawn by the absence of the heir in the past, she named her successor, although at the very last moment.

Whatever her successes, a woman in the lead was, for many, still unacceptable. Even Richard in Shakespeare's play gives a sigh and says:

Why, this it is, when men are rul'd by women:
[...]
We are not safe, Clarence, we are not safe! (I.i. 62-70)

Nevertheless, Elizabeth knew though how to use her womanhood as a tool, as B.R.Lewis asserts:

Elizabeth took blatant advantage of the fact that her enemies expected a woman to be indecisive [...], on the outside was a monarch who offered hope and then backtracked, gave half a promise and then denied it. (2003:2)

Although the monarch was a woman, the Tudors' blood still circulated in her veins, and she counted on public opinion to assist her; she needed favourable press and the right image of as monarch, as Tarnya Cooper explains: 'Her public profile had to attest to her unique status as a woman apart from her sex', because, as an unmarried woman and a monarch, she had 'more to prove and more to lose in being portrayed than most European rulers' (2003, internet source). To support her primordially fragile position, Elizabeth started

creating her own publicity: 'she herself was the chief author of this persona' (B.R.Lewis, 2003:2). She 'distributed' herself basically everywhere during the so-called "re-coinage" that proceeded between 1558-1561.

The Queen's profile on the newly minted coins showed a crowned young woman with her hair loosely flowing to stress her status as a maiden, and [...] this was accompanied by the Tudor rose to emphasize continuity and her right to rule. (Cooper, 2003, internet source)

She herself later invented the image of the divine Queen, an image that persisted without much effort on her part. Simply, her propaganda worked perfectly:

Poets, playwrights, painters, [...] propagandists, pamphleteers, and ballad-makers all conspired to intensify the image of Elizabeth as "Gloriana," the Virgin Queen or the "Faerie Queene". Artists promoted Elizabeth in all her bejewelled glamour, surrounded by a glittering court full of lusty young men whose dauntless deeds she inspired. (B.R.Lewis, 2003:2)

The Queen, though, was not glorified only in writing or painting, but also various festivities were arranged to appeal to 'Good Queen Bess'. Bejblík writes that 'Elizabeth was, in the literature of Shakespeare's time, connected with the empress of all life on the earth and in the ocean' and her maidhood was compared to 'the maidhood of Luna and made her empress of sublunar sphere, and that was a considerable honour' (1979:67, my translation)²⁹. This tribute was paid to Elizabeth mostly during feasts that were organized by the nobility during Elizabeth's visits at their residences. Bejblík describes one of these festivities prepared at Elvetham by the earl of Hertford. The Queen was welcomed by fusillade and poetry recitation, the main part of the festivity proceeded in a pond that was purposely dug in the shape of the half moon – a symbol of the virginity and power of the empress. From this pond, representing the sea, the gods, Neptune and Oceanus, arose and respectfully bowed before Elizabeth, their empress. Eventually Envy, disgusted by all the respect expressed to the Queen, appeared and obstructed the way separating the throne and the rest of the land; however, courtiers and citizens removed the barrier, and other gods came to bow to Elizabeth. Undoubtedly, this all expressed the great respect that was paid to Elizabeth. She became truly popular (1979:67-68).

This is not surprising since, even as 'only' a woman, Elizabeth was able to stabilize the country: 'Elizabeth's reign was during one of the more constructive periods in English history' (B.R.Lewis, 2003:4). Her 'country grew richer' (Maurois, 1993:224, my translation)³⁰, literature bloomed, fashion and education came to the fore: all of this because of Elizabeth's interest in knowledge, courtly behaviour and extravagant dress. She also

managed to keep England's enemies away from the country. This is surprising since her enemies 'enjoyed far greater wealth, influence, and military might', such that 'England had little chance of resisting' (B.R.Lewis, 2003:2) in case of an attack. The explanation for 'how she was able to do this', has already been answered; however, it should also be remembered that, except for being a great politician and propagandist, her greatest advantage probably lay in the fact that most people underrated her as a woman, so she always astonished her advisers and visitors alike, by her abilities – she certainly had intelligence.

A French Ambassador, surprised by her linguistic skills, once praised her for her great faculty of speech; but, the Queen, used to situations like this, placidly replied: 'There is no marvel in a woman learning to speak, but there would be in teaching her to hold her tongue'. Quite a long sentence for someone who was considered to be totally "brainless". Without a doubt, Elizabeth was forced to fight for her position. Without a doubt, she succeeded – at least in the eyes of her people.

2.3. The play

This chapter will try to explore the Tudor (and generally Elizabethan) influence on the play, as well as the Tudor's possible presence in the play and the fashioning employed because of it.

Richard III is one of the Shakespeare's earliest plays, and scholars often argue that the play was written to flatter the Tudors. The question though is: who should have been flattered by this play? At the time Shakespeare wrote his play, the country was ruled by the last Tudor (as explained in the previous chapters), and a Tudor ascending the throne after this Queen was not hoped for; hence it could only have been Elizabeth who was flattered by the monstrosity of Richard III. Nonetheless, Richard had been blackened long before Shakespeare even thought about moving to London and writing for the court: Richard's "legend" was created directly after the Tudors usurped the throne. As explained before, Henry VII procured the villainous myth, and Shakespeare only tinged Richard's reputation with a dramatic flourish. So, how would Shakespeare have complimented the Queen by material that came into existence almost a hundred years before, material that she knew very well?

One of the possibilities involves Shakespeare's use of the notoriously known material at an exceptionally good time. Although the country was more or less stabilized, the danger of future disorder remained, especially since the royal succession was not solved. Notice that the same problem actually arose in the play, since, although the country was saved by a great

Tudor, the villainious Richard died without a heir. The play ended with an expression of great hope: 'the lesson taught' then was that, although the situation may appear dramatic, it still may end well. The play probably served as a kind of reassurance. Nevertheless, this certainly should not serve as the only explanation, as there is much more to the play.

Shakespeare probably chose this topic for its being genuinely safe: knowing the Queen and the plays she has enjoyed, he simply wrote a play that would be heartwarming for the audience, especially the Queen, though not really aiming to flatter as, for example, he does in *Macbeth*. Such flattery was not necessary in Elizabeth's case. *Macbeth* contrasts to *Richard III* in surely being written to flatter; however, the situation arising from the accession of James I was incomparable with the situation within the Elizabethan period. As the King of the Scots and son of the executed Mary, James needed flattery to stabilise his identity as English monarch: Elizabeth did not. Since Shakespeare did not need to flatter his Queen, pleasing seems a more acceptable explanation. For this purpose, he used the traditional form of the play, with all its symbolism, as well as newly accommodated, at that time very popular, Italian influence. But Shakespeare was never the type only to repeat and rewrite dully: in spite of following the tradition, he, of course, created something that would become influential and fascinating for generations to come, a play which will now be examined in terms of its Elizabethan background.

2.3.1 The real Richard and his theatre counterpart

The Tudors created a distorted myth about Henry VII predecessor, at least as it to present historians: it actually seems that Richard was never "the evil one"; and Richard's monstrosity was denied even, as mentioned above, as early the seventeenth century, by William Cornwallis in his *The Praise of King Richard the Third*. Cornwallis purges Richard of this distortion, citing the words of an anonymous author:

Never was he noted all the life of King Edward to thirst after the kingdom; never denied he any commandment of his prince, but performed all his employments discreetly, valiantly, successfully. [...] Then how do our chroniclers report for truth, were not their malice greater than either truth or their judgement? But they are historians, and must be believed.

While historians should be believed, to a lesser or greater extent, this is not true with the history-mythologizers of the sixteenth century. It should be emphasized that Richard developed in one of the most chaotic periods of English history, and chaos often distorts historical truths or can give excuse to such distortions.

Richard's brother, apparently handsome and talented, ascended the throne in 1461. However, he is said to have two fateful weaknesses: laziness and the love of luxury, two "vices" that one can easily cultivate if one is a King. Moreover, instead of marrying someone of royal birth, as was expected, he brought to his court Elizabeth Woodville, the widow of one of his enemies, and along with her the Woodville family, a family that hungered for power. In this case, Richard, surprisingly just as his real-life counterpart, had no love for these 'upstarts', as is clearly seen from a speech from a dialogue involving Richard, the King's wife and her relatives:

Richard. I cannot tell; the world is grown so bad
That wrens make prey where eagles dare not perch.
Since every Jack became a gentleman
There's many a gentle person made a jack. (I.iii. 70-73)

The Woodvilles certainly wanted to get as much power as possible; however, in the legend, Richard was said to hunger for power and to hate his brother heartily. However, there is no evidence that Richard violently longed for the crown or hated his brother, but quite the contrary, as Louis B. Wright claims:

He [*Richard*] showed his love and loyalty throughout his life. He wanted him [*Edward*] to be a great king. And his disappointment was intense when Edward let pleasures and idleness come between himself and duty. (1960:xix)

The reason Edward neglected his Kingly duties involved his mistress Jane Shore, who is again mentioned, in a play, by Edward's brother Richard, who comments:

We say that Shore's wife hath a pretty foot,
A cherry lip, a bonny eye, a passing pleasing tongue.
[...]
Naught with Mistress Shore? I tell thee, fellow,
He that doth naught with her (excepting one)
Were best to do it secretly, alone. (I.i. 93-100)

This is a complex sexual pun which, especially when acted for the popular stage and not the Royal court, would have used hand-gestures to make the point. Edward 'doth naught with her' - 'doth naught[iness]' (Elizabethan slang for vagina). The last comment would have been even funnier, Richard suggesting that the Kingdom would be better off if his brother just masturbated in his room instead: 'He [...] were best to do it secretly, alone'. Richard's playfulness is irreverent; but, as political advice in Edward's case, sound advice a virgin queen might well have seconded. Regardless of Richard's disappointment at his brother's 'failure', he seems to have remained loyal, as well as proved himself to be 'one of the ablest generals the Yorkists had produced' (Wright, 1960:xxi). He led Edward's armies and, as

mentioned in the play, fought with Prince Edward, son of Henry VI. However, there is no evidence that Richard slew him, as the play suggests. Besides, it also seems that Richard did not kill his brother George, Duke of Clarence. It is said that George was legally executed for treason, as Wright confirms: 'He had betrayed the King on more than one occasion and was utterly irresponsible and unstable' (1960:xxii). It is also doubted that Richard had his nephews killed, or that he killed his wife. The whole wooing scene is a pure creation: he really married Anne; however, the reality was much more ordinary than the dramatized version. L.B.Wright explains the situation:

Richard and Anne had known each other since they were children. Richard, it should be remembered, had spent several years in the household of Anne's father, the Earl of Warwick, at Middleham in Yorkshire. Richard apparently was genuinely in love with her and won her consent to marriage in the winter of 1472. (1960:xxi)

In its simplest reading, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, might well have been, instead of a monster, only a helpful brother who rightfully complains about his brother:

I was a pack-horse in his great affairs;
A weeder-out of his proud adversaries;
A liberal rewarder of his friends;
To royalize his blood, I spent my own. (I.iii. 122-126)

He might even have been a great uncle and a loving husband hurt by the death of his only legitimate son. It is even possible that he had never lusted for the English throne, as, he proposes, in a cynical way, in a dialogue with Lord Rivers:

Rivers. We follow'd then our lord, our sovereign king:
So should we you, if you should be our king.
Richard. If I should be? I had rather be a pedlar!
Far be it from my heart, the thought thereof.

Scholars and historians may argue about Richard's real nature; nevertheless, even if it was the truth that Richard killed all the victims ascribed to his monstrosity, it should be remembered that, at that time, 'violence was a way of life. The crown of England belonged to him who could seize it and keep a head upon his shoulders to wear it' (Wright, 1960:xvi). Whatever the truth about Richard, it is clear that he managed, as king of England, only to keep his head upon his shoulders for two short years.

3.3.2. Structure of the play

It was stated that the play is highly influenced by the theatrical forms of the Medieval Period; however, some scholars argue that the structure of the play is purely Senecan. Anthony Hammond asserts that 'the structure of the play is highly organized and formal, in a

way that reveals its depth to its Senecan models' (2002:97). This argument can be supported by the play, as shown in Hammond:

Shakespeare uses a most regular 'rising action' to deal with [...] the ensuing epitasis as Richard progressively surmounts the obstacles in his path. These are chiefly the existence of his brothers and their children, and the presence of a powerful party under Queen Elizabeth. [...] The climax, however, occurs at the elimination of a relatively unimportant third party. [...] The catastasis consists of Richard's actual gaining of the throne. [...] The catastrophe is spread leisurely upon the field of Bosworth. (2002:97/8)

This certainly holds true; however, this contrasts with the claim by some scholars who present Shakespeare as an uneducated creature with no idea who Seneca was, and probably unable to use such a structure consciously anyway. Thus, as seen in the play, the structure resembles the Senecan one, and the question is how Shakespeare acquired that structure.

In contrast with what has been said by some scholars, Shakespeare received a proper education at an Elizabethan "grammar school", as Wright claims: 'many cultivated men of the day received all their formal education in the grammar school' (1960:xxxv). Although not a university graduate, '[Shakespeare] would have acquired a familiarity with Latin and [...] some Greek. He would have read Latin authors and become acquainted with the plays of Plautus and Terence' (1960:xxxv). Nevertheless, even with this formal education and his 'curiosity that sent him in search of information' (Wright, 1960:xxxv), it is doubtful that he would have become familiar enough with Seneca to be able to write a play in this structured way. On the other hand, the 'co-operation' between playwrights of the period has been much discussed, and it is presumed that some of his contemporary 'university wits' such as Christopher Marlowe made use of this form, that Shakespeare noticed the structure at some of their plays, and that he eventually started using it as well. At the same time, Shakespeare was clearly influenced by Medieval theatrical forms, which will now be explored more explicitly.

3.3.3. Richard's physical deformity and moral vice

The Medieval influence - of course, transformed by the Elizabethan period - can be seen clearly in the character of Richard. His deformed body, which is important from the very first soliloquy, is surely not based only on the Tudor "myth":

Richard. Cheated of feature by dissembling Nature,
Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world scarce half made up-
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me, as I halt by them- (I.i. 19-23)

‘Deform’d’, ‘unfinish’d, and ‘unfashionable’ - by this soliloquy, Richard starts his game of butchery which should guide him to his dreamed of target: becoming King of England. As with his violent nature, Richard’s deformed body also was - from what is known today - only the creation of the Tudors. It surely suited them well, since the Elizabethans had ‘a concept of harmony in Nature [that expressed] fitness and aptness to the divine plan’ (Hammond, 2002:126). Based on Hammond’s assertion, if the audience saw someone ugly, misshapen, someone with a disproportionate body, they would naturally believe it was an outer sign of the person’s spirit; hence they would expect Richard to be a monster with devilish plans. Queen Margaret expresses these Elizabethan beliefs in her dialogue with Richard:

O, let them keep it till thy sins be ripe,
 And then hurl down their indignation
 On thee, the troubler of the poor world’s peace.
 [...]
 Thou elvish-mark’d, abortive, rooting hog,
 Thou that wast seal’d in thy nativity
 The slave of Nature, and the son of hell; (I.iii. 219-230)

This "legend" is nowadays outdated, and it seems, as J.J.Norwich asserts, that Richard was ‘a man of perfectly normal physique’ (1999:356). On the other hand, Martin Hilský adds that Richard could have, ‘as a consequence of a complicated delivery, one shoulder blade higher, but no period portrait [...] proves that he had a hunch and a withered arm’ (2004:134, my translation)³¹. It might hold true; nonetheless, Richard’s deformity features in the play and, as such, must be considered as ‘an outward and visible sign of his inward spiritual gracelessness’ (Hammond, 2002:105). Richard’s deformity is used in two different ways: Richard uses it ‘as an excuse’ (2002:105) for acting or not acting in a required or desirable way. When the citizens come to ask him to ascend the throne, Richard modestly reminds them of his imperfections:

Yet so much is my poverty of spirit,
 So mighty and so many my defects,
 That I would rather hide me from my greatness –
 Being a bark to brook no mighty sea- (III.vii. 158-161)

Richard is such an innocent, but his ‘peculiarity’ is repeatedly criticized by his enemies. Although criticizing his appearance, they refer ‘to the evil within him’ (Hammond, 2002:105). Rather than to "inner ugliness", as can be seen in Queen Margret’s lines above (I.iii. 219-230). Moreover, in the course of the play, ‘Richard becomes the physical representation not only of a monster but of a deformed body politic’ (Besnault, Bitot, 2002:110). Richard, who aims at

the English crown, eventually reaches his target, and is asked to rule the country that 'wants her proper limbs'. Ironically, Buckingham pleads for the deformed Richard before the Mayor and Citizens:

The noble isle doth want her proper limbs;
Her face defac'd with scars of infamy
Her royal stock graft with ignoble plants. (III.vii. 124-126)

Yet, Richard does not represent a humpbacked wretch who awakens into a situation where he is asked to sit on the throne by lucky chance. Quite to the contrary, he consciously plots his way to the throne - and apparently enjoys his bloody fun during the process. His body may be 'weak', but this 'defect' is well-balanced by a sharp mind that keeps him a step ahead of his oponents, wins him the audience's sympathy, and 'attracts their attention, both by embodying its own destructive and anti-authorian impulses, and by engaging the audience in a conspiratorial relationship with him' (Hammond, 2002:100). The audience knows Richard's plans from the very first soliloquy, since he lets his ideas emerge from the depths of his mind to the surface:

Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
By drunken prophecies, libels, and dreams,
To set my brother Clarence and the King
In deadly hate, the one against the other: (I.i.32-35)

Here Shakespeare certainly employs an aspect of dramatic heritage: 'Shakespeare rejected the obvious choice of representing [Richard] merely as a ranting tyrant' -Anthony Hammond explaining futher that 'the part developed from the morality play Vice' (2002:99-100). Richard himself appraises himself as being Vice, crying on:

I say, without characters fame lives long.
Thus, like the formal Vice, Iniquity,
I moralize two meanings in one word. (III.i. 81-83)

Shakespeare grew up in a period when new theatrical forms were being applied; but still, Vice was often assigned a part, as it had its position of a main character in traditional morality plays. So, there are basically two explanations for Shakespeare's choice: firstly, he might have remembered the character, or might have included it unconsciously; or he might have expected that his audience was used to it, or apparently liked it, so he used it purposely. In either case, the choice proved excellent. Hammond asserts that 'clearly, the Vice offered opportunities for the actor on a much broader scale than did the characterization of most Tudor plays' (2002:100), and it allowed Shakespeare to create a character dominating the whole play. Tony Tanner gives evidence claiming that Richard

appears in fourteen out of twenty-five scenes, and even when he is not actually present, his shadow hangs over everything. He speaks nearly a third of lines – i.e. about one thousand out of some three thousand, six hundred. This is a completely Richard's play (1994:lvii)

- and certainly formal Vice's play. Founding his theory on the sixty-odd characteristics of the Vice, Hammond explores the similarities between Vice and Richard, and comes to the conclusion that Richard, like formal Vice, uses

asides, discussion of plans with the audience, disguise, long avoidance, but ultimate suffering of punishment, moral commentary, [...] self-explanation in soliloquy, satirical functions which include an attack on women, and various signs of depravity such as boasting and conceit, enjoyment of power, immoral sexuality. Of the Vice's familiar modes of expression we find impertinence, logic-chopping, use of oaths and proverbs, and the self-betraying slip of the tongue. (2002:101)

There are certainly a lot of similarities; yet, Richard is evidently an absolute master of disguise, as is seen, out of innumerable examples, in the scene where Richard seduces Lady Anne, whose husband was killed by Richard, and who now accompanies the funeral procession of another 'virtuous Lancaster', Henry VI, her father-in-law. Richard has obviously killed the King as well; nevertheless, he determines to seduce her. Although, 'as a project, it sounds not only deeply distasteful, but utterly impossible' (Tanner, 1994:lxii), he really wins her over, and sends her to his palace, with, for him so typical, a hidden disguise:

Richard. That it may please you leave these sad designs
To him that hath most cause to be a mourner,
And presently repair to Crosby Place,
Where, after I have solemnly interr'd
At Chertsey Monastery this noble King,
And wet his grave with my repentant tears,
I will with all expedient duty see you. (I.ii. 214-220)

After this act of bravura, Richard, now impressed with himself, continues after Anne's exit in Vice's tradition, revealing to the audience, with evident joy, his horrible history of slaying her husband and father-in-law, and ends in praising his manliness arrogantly:

I do mistake my person all this while!
Upon my life, she finds – although I cannot –
Myself to be a marvellous proper man. (I.ii. 257-259)

This scene surely shows Shakespeare's brilliance, as this breathtaking scene is all his invention. It is undoubtedly a masterpiece: Richard is impressed with himself, the audience is impressed by both the monster, who despite his brilliance will supposedly be doomed to Hell (as will Vice), and the author of the monster.

The observations concerning the similarity with Vice are true; but, as Hammond observes, 'they do not describe the wholly irrational aspect of Richard's behaviour: the evil that the other characters react to in varying degrees of fright and horror' (2002:102). Apparently formal Vice played evil tricks on the other characters in a play, and was doomed to Hell; yet, it did not evoke the feeling of horror. Hammond finds a solution and suggests that into 'a mixture derived from medieval models is added a more modern ingredient: the Machiavel' (2002:104). This however does not mean that the two characters would simply complement each other:

Their essential qualities [actually] coincided nicely. [Machiavel] was ambitious, cruel, morally depraved to the point of seeing immorality as something virtuous, sinister, treacherous, guileful, anti-religious, criminal from choice. (Hammond, 2002:104)

To sum up, Richard is a persona created by the combination of his deformity (which predetermined him to be a monster), wit, and perspective of Vice, as well as his Machiavelian brutality, which brought onto the stage terror and accelerating horror. Well, not literally "on stage", as all the murders happen "off stage", except one, as Tanner notes: 'The only person, who actually dies on stage is Richard himself' (1994:lvii).

3.3.4. Symbols of Richard's cruelty, rise and fall

Although the evil role of Richard is recognizable from the very beginning, Shakespeare still emphasizes Richard's monstrosity by various symbols that were often used in Elizabethan literary works. Richard is frequently compared to various animals symbolizing 'savagery, demonic forces, [...] impurity and lechery' (Besnault, Bitot, 2002:111). Clarence, for instance 'dream the boar did raze his helm' (III.iv. 82). When Richmond addresses his army, he calls Richard

The wretched, bloody, and usurping boar,
That spoil'd your summer fields and fruitful vines,
Swills your warm blood like wash, and makes his trough
In your embowell'd bosoms – this foul swine. (V.ii. 7-10)

Another important symbol appearing in the play is the symbol of the sun and shadow. Norwich says that the sun has traditionally been a symbol of the king. Richard, on the other hand, is compared to a shadow throughout the play. From the very beginning Richard is 'overshadowing' the throne of England, his only pleasure is 'to spy [his] shadow in the sun' (I.i. 26), and the shadow imagery continues as he takes over the throne. Clearly, he appears in the play as an arch-villain - the shadow, thus, as the king. He should 'accept' the sun (the sun usually functioning as a symbol of kings); however, he is unable to take up this role, so his

sun is only 'weary', refusing to rise on the day of the battle. Here the 'weary'sun can only symbolize the 'weary' villain-king who has just woken up to the last morning of his life.

2.3.5. Richard's downfall

Richard's downfall though starts much earlier: the battle with its 'weary monarch' is only the last stage of quite a long process. So, how and why Richard collapses is a very important question to answer. It seems, from what was said previously, that this monster, who is basically only pulling the strings of the other puppets in the play, until everything is under his control, who masters every situation with a smile, and 'is cool as could be' (1994:lxix), and who is disturbingly unpredictable as his bright mind keeps him way ahead of everyone, would never collapse. There appears to be no reason for that, as there is no single character in the play who would be able to react to his deeds in any adequate way. 'He is always icily in control, [...] elegant, mannered, even fastidious – you will never find a drop of blood on his hands' (Tony Tanner, 1994:lxix); however, the minute he seizes the crown, the mode of the play changes completely.

Well, to dampen this claim a bit, there is actually one character Richard is unable to silence. Tanner maintains that 'the voice Richard can never silence', a voice that 'haunts him throughout the play' (1994:lxiii), belongs to old Queen Margaret. Her very presence is quite fanciful, as, firstly, Margaret could have never appeared in the play, since she died in 1482 - in fact, she never returned to England after being banished years before. Secondly, she was only a woman (just as above discussed Queen Elizabeth). Interestingly, Shakespeare's women are quite often pictured as, in a way powerful and peculiar, although 'as many modern scholars assume, male spectators in Shakespeare's time would have responded with anxious hostility to representation of women's power and autonomy' (Phyllis Rackin, 2002:77). Could Queen Margaret use her power to flatter Queen Elizabeth, who was herself certainly difficult to silence? This question is not to be answered simply, as, of course, we have no access to Shakespeare's thoughts and cannot predict the Queen's reaction, if actually realized that Margaret was placed in the play for her. Hence, scholarly support for this idea is merely speculative. The only thing that can be remarked upon here is that the female characters of the period seem 'either womanly or warlike. They can be either virtuous or powerful but never both' (Rackin, 2002:79). Certainly the female characters are, even presently, quite difficult to handle on stage, which is hardly surprising if one recollects the position of women in the sixteenth century and realizes that all the female roles were, firstly, acted by boys, and secondly, were not given the same attention as the male roles.

If Margaret did not appear specifically for Queen Elizabeth, then, since she had died some years before the time in which the play is set, she could have been in some way presented as 'the voice of the past – of all the treachery and pitiless cruelty and bloody butchery of the long years of civil war' (Tanner, 1994:lxx) To silence iniquity and injustice committed in the past would be impossible; hence, words of guilt are easily traceable in the play. It is also necessary to remember that, by reaching the crown, Richard became an 'upstart' - he was not predestined to become a king, but forced his position by butchering his way there. So, in the Elizabethan perception of the world, he had to be punished for breaking 'the rules', and Queen Margaret then, accompanied by the other women in the play, became 'the voice of destiny' as a reminder of traditional Resurrection plays, or as some scholars claim, the women function as a chorus from the Medieval plays. Lull looks at the Resurrection play though and explains this in detail:

Each of the surviving Resurrection plays portrays three fundamental actions: the lamentation of the three Marys, the women's approach to the tomb – where they learn of the Resurrection from an angel or angels – and finally their testimony about what they have learned. The three female-group scenes in *Richard III* – all composed of triads or quasi-triads of women – echo these three traditional elements of the Resurrection plays. (1999:9-10)

In the same way, in *Richard III* the three women (actually there are three, but they never seem to meet on stage) first lament for Richard's victims, then approach the tomb – the Tower in this case - where they discover that Richard has become King – and in IV.iv., they finally testify their experience, and more importantly, 'unify' to curse Richard. The curse at the end is pronounced by Richard's own mother, the Duchess of York, whose womb is to blame for his appearance, and who ends her prophesy:

My prayers on the adverse party fight;
And there the little souls of Edward's children
Whisper the spirits of thine enemies
And promise them success and victory.
Bloody thou art; bloody will be thy end. (IV.iv. 191-195)

Still, this mere factor did not cause Richard's downfall. It began when his shadow should have turned to the sun, when he reached his long-longed for target and became king. He was perfectly secure in plotting his way to the throne; however, not predestined, he could never really make a successful king. Even if Shakespeare had thought of making Richard a good king - which would be absolutely tedious - since the play was written in the Tudor period and the aim was not to offend but, at least, to entertain, the audience would never have accepted it. As a great plotter though before reaching the throne, Richard managed to empty

his world completely: he loses his wit and calmness, and starts to make fatal mistakes under the pressure of his seized position. Tony Tanner mentions the first two 'unmistakable signs that he [Richard] has hit his limit' (1994:lxvi). In a very short, but extremely important, scene, a Scrivener comes onto stage and comments about the false accusations against Lord Hastings, whom Richard has had beheaded. The Scrivener claims:

Here's a good world the while! Who is so gross
That cannot see this palpable device?
Yet who's so bold but says he sees it not?
Bad is the world, and all will come to naught
When such ill-dealing must be seen in thought. (III.vi. 10-14)

According to Tanner 'the moral outrage of anonymous servants at the cruel [...] doing of their "superiors" is very important in Shakespeare, [as] the whole world is beginning to see through Richard' (1994:lxvii). Truly, the whole world, at this point, sees Richard's true nature. In the next scene Buckingham comes and reports to Richard the citizens' reaction to the announcement that he will be the new king.

God help me: they spake not a word,
But like dumb statues or breathing stones
Star'd each on other, and look'd deadly pale. (III.vii. 24-26)

At this point Richard starts to become aware that he will never really become a legitimate king, since none can ascend the throne successfully without 'the acclaim of the people of London' (Tanner, 1994:lxvii).

Richard also begins to lose his prudence. When Buckingham, the person who helped him to the throne, demands a promised estate, Richard refuses, and moreover, asks Buckingham to kill the two princes, a request which, of course, Buckingham does not want to fulfil. Richard, Tanner asserts, 'immediately, [and] insanely, sets down Buckingham in his mind as an enemy' (1994:lxvii). Richard loses his peace, however, he is a fighter, and is unprepared to resign. If he cannot become the legitimate king himself, he is prepared to accomplish his plan by marrying Elizabeth's daughter, though the scene is nothing like the wooing of Anne. Richard asks Elizabeth for her daughter's hand, but is unusually uneasy. He does not command, but pleads.

Richard. Infer fair England's peace by this alliance.
Elizabeth. Which she shall purchase with still-lasting war.
Richard. Tell her the King, that may command, entreats. (IV.iv. 343-345)

Richard himself realizes that he has changed and lost his good spirit.

Give me a bowl of wine.
I have not that alacrity of spirit

Nor cheer of mind that I was wont to have. (V.iii. 72-74)

The last part of the play, concerning the battle, finalizes Richard's downfall, and at the same time 'gives' the final delight and great hope to the Tudors. If Queen Margaret served as 'the voice of past', then Richmond becomes the voice of future. Nevertheless, Tanner comments on this strange situation:

Although [Richmond] notionally overcomes Richard, we see no battle, and Richmond can hardly be said to 'defeat' Richard who, indeed, rises and falls all by himself. We see nothing of Richmond as a soldier or general, and, indeed, he is hardly individuated at all. He is curiously transparent figure – more like a principle of Good than a man of action. (1994:lxxi)

Tanner really observes a very interesting verity. However, thinking about Richmond being more of a principle – the voice of future - than a real person seems quite a sensible decision. In this play, Shakespeare created a monstrous, but still breathtaking character. Trying to characterize Richmond, he would never achieve even half the success of Richard; moreover, he accomplished what he wanted. He wrote a play that would be pleasing to the Tudors, based on the Elizabethan traditions and principles; the 'upstart' was punished, the audience was taught their moral lesson, and Richmond, Henry VII, became the 'hero', even without the necessity of characterization, and Shakespeare proved a brilliant playwright. What more to add – a work of a bright mind keeping Shakespeare a step ahead of his contemporaries, well, at least in the eyes of some.

3. Macbeth

If *Richard III* was written to entertain Queen Elizabeth – and, at the same time, to pay tribute to her Tudor ancestors – *Macbeth* was certainly created to flatter the succeeding king of England, James I. This is actually seen more explicitly than in the case of the earlier play. The explicitness of the adjustments that were made in *Macbeth* should not be surprising, as the play emerged in very distinct circumstances. As stated above, when Shakespeare was writing the play for Queen Elizabeth, it was quite clear what types of plays she enjoyed and what would please her – the length of her reign assured such an understanding among the artists of her day. However, the situation that arose with the accession of James I was quite different. It became obvious that, if one wanted to retain the favour of the crown, one had to alter the style of plays, to make all necessary amendments to flatter the new monarch, and also to convince him that the play was written specifically for him, not for his predecessor. Despite the differences in audience and that audience's expectations, these two plays are quite similar in basic structure, they are also very different, especially in regard to style, which does not mean that Shakespeare would not have had his quill in all the scenes of the latter play, even if *Macbeth* certainly includes some scenes untypical for Shakespeare.

3.1. Dating of an un-Shakespearian spectacle

It is commonly believed – and Kenneth Muir supports the assumption – that the first performance of *Macbeth* took place 'at Hampton Court on 7 August 1606 before King Christian of Denmark and James I' (2004:xxiii); or, as J. G. McManaway argues, it was 'the first performance of Shakespeare's abbreviated version' (1949:149). As with *Richard III*, there is a long-running dispute between scholars about the exact dating of the play – not only its performance, but also its 'birth'. Kenneth Muir writes that

the play was [...] written, we may assume, between 1603 and 1606. The allusions to equivocation and to the hanging of traitors were presumably written after the trial of Father Garnet (28 March 1606) for complicity in the Gunpowder Plot. The words 'yet could not equivocate to heaven' imply that the speech was written after 3 May, when Garnet was hanged. (2004:xx)

This dating would be quite logical, since, in 1603, James I became King of England after the death of Elizabeth, and the necessity arose to flatter the new King with a play, and *Macbeth* was certainly intended to flatter the new monarch. Nevertheless, there are some scholars who claim that Shakespeare had already written the play during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and this version was only later adjusted for the new patron. Arthur Melville Clark suggests an even earlier dating, asserting that 'the play was written in 1601', his main reason for claiming this being that 'the play contained some allusions of the Gowry conspiracy' that took place

the previous year (1982:109-13). However, Muir opposes this theory, because, for him, ‘none of these allusions is convincing’ and, moreover, as he continues, these allusions ‘could have been derived from the anonymous play, *Gowrie*, performed by Shakespeare’s company in 1604’ (2004:xviii). Still, some scholars date the origin of the play as far back as 1599, their main argument being that ‘Shakespeare would not have dared to write a play which gave approval to a rebellion against a reigning monarch after he had learned of James’s strong views on the matter’ (Kenneth Muir, 2004:xviii-xix). Shakespeare certainly knew his monarchs well, and would never have wanted to offend them, but such an early dating of the play seems to be quite vulnerable to claim, since, if Shakespeare had really written the play and later realized that its main plot was based on material which would be offensive for King James, he could have simply created a brand new play, which would probably be easier than adjusting such unsuitable material. Nevertheless, the dating, as in the case of *Richard III*, is not vital: the important thing is that *Macbeth* was well received, and that surely was Shakespeare’s aim when he started writing it.

Not only dating the play causes discrepancies between scholars: the main problem lies in the Shakespearian atypicality of some scenes. In those spurious cases where people have doubted that Shakespeare is the author of his plays, *Macbeth* is especially discussed in terms of authorship. H. J. C. Grierson asserts that ‘some parts of the play [...] are certainly un-Shakespearian. All those namely, in which Hecate appears and the witches are made to dance and sing’ (1914:xi). Grierson, however, adds that ‘with the exception of the Hecate interludes, no parts of the play can be safely detached as certainly not Shakespearian. His hands touched everything’ (1914: xiii). It might hold true that Shakespeare did not write the Hecate scene himself; nonetheless, some scholars even argue that the scene was not included in the original play at all. As the manuscript of the play did not survive, scholars and historians have drawn the play from the First Folio (originating in 1623) and also from the diaries of Shakespeare’s contemporary theatre goers, one of them being Simon Forman, who wrote about *Macbeth* in his *Book of Plays*, in which he noted all the plays he had seen. As Peter Thompson writes: ‘Had Hecate been included in the cast of the 1611 Globe performance, Forman would probably have remembered her. This scene is nothing if it is not theatrically impressive’ (1983:152). It seems very improbable though that the scene was added after Shakespeare’s death, since, by *Macbeth*, he certainly wanted to impress his new monarch, who undoubtedly enjoyed the style of such scenes.

Shakespeare has certainly been proven a master of fashioning; while writing his plays, he always bore in mind the preferences and uniqueness of his monarchs. Since King James

was fond of masques, a hypothetical explanation for the Hecate scenes being written, or at least being supervised and consequently inscribed into the play, by Shakespeare himself, may be found. Although masques were not really typical for Shakespeare's existing style, there is not a single reason why he would not incorporate this newly appreciated 'literary style' into his play, in an attempt to enliven the play with a masque-like scene (the Hecate scene) designed explicitly to please King James, who loved masques not only because of their colourful costumes and grand entertainment. He also realized that literature, and especially drama, could be used for 'a shrewd sense of propaganda' (John Butler, 2003, internet source), understanding very well that

books, masques, sermons, and plays could all be employed in his service, that they were the media which could best disseminate his views of kingship and impress upon a large number of people its power and majesty. The court masque, expensive and elaborate, baroque and ritualistic, symbolized that power and majesty, and the king's physical place as the focal point of the entertainment reinforced it further. Thus James and Queen Anne patronized Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones, the great architect and designer of the sets for Jonson's masques. (Butler, 2003, internet source)

King James I also gave his patronage to the company in which Shakespeare was a shareholder; therefore, Shakespeare's plays must have been enjoyable for James, enough so to patronize the company. Besides there were others to fill the role: James also employed the masters of the masque, Ben Jonson and Indigo Jones. There was no reason for James to become the royal patron of someone whose plays he would not consider spectacular – and James was surely a fastidious spectator.

3.2. James I and his influence on the play

Writing the play for James I required a great deal of tact, for he was rather a controversial ruler and very unlike Queen Elizabeth. He ascended to the throne only eight hours after the death of Queen Elizabeth; and, although she later became known as 'Good Queen Bess', it certainly was not caused by her godly reign but by her successor proving to be so bad. However, as Martin Kovář relates, 'in the spring of 1603, only a few people in England were mourning the death of Elizabeth I' (2001:9, my translation)³². This should not be surprising, since Elizabeth's unwillingness to get married – or at least to designate her successor – played a great part in the last period of her reign, and consequently led to an insecurity among all the social classes. For this reason and others, James was welcomed warmly in England; however, he later proved to be a reckless ruler, which was, for many,

quite a disappointing discovery. Due to his controversial nature, he was also a difficult ruler for a playwright to write for. Such a playwright had to have much tact in writing a play for James.

3.2.1. James's succession and reign

At the time of his succession, James was not the only candidate for the English throne, as Martin Kovář asserts, 'James's right [...] was weakened by Henry VIII's will, which excluded from the succession all the progeny of Margaret Tudor, Henry VII's daughter, and James IV Stuart's wife' (2001:9, my translation)³³. Moreover, he was a foreigner, a Scot despised by many. Robert Cecil probably believed that James would make a good king, since, as Kovář continues, 'by patient manoeuvring' (2001:10, my translation)³⁴, he had already secured his position while Elizabeth was still living. This was presumably due to the fact that, during his reign as King of Scotland, James, 'a shrewd and flexible diplomat' (Thomas Babington Macaulay, the early Victorian Wig historian), had shown 'great skill in balancing opposing and potentially dangerous political forces in Scotland' (George P. Landow, internet source). Besides, he also had two sons and a daughter, which was a great advantage after the preceding period of succession insecurity. However, as King of Britain, though he succeeded in unifying the thrones, he was a failure, 'taking little trouble to understand English ways and customs' (Landow, internet source). It is true that he inherited from Elizabeth some financial problems; but still, when arriving to England, James was bedazzled 'by the magnificence of the late Elizabethan world [...] that was incomparable' (Kovář, 2001:11, my translation)³⁵ with what he had known in Scotland. James was so impressed by his new home that he 'was later writing about his arrival to England as if writing about the entering of the Promised Land' (Kovář, 2001:11, my translation)³⁶. For him, England really became the land of hospitality, since he had at his disposal many more financial sources than in his homeland, and he is said to have spent all the money he was given. André Maurois claims that '[James's] woman-like affection for jewels costs him up to thirty-seven thousand pounds a year, while he spends only twenty-seven thousand on the army' (1993:241, my translation)³⁷.

James passed most of his time hunting. He was even rumoured to be a sadist, one who not only enjoyed hunting but really loved killing animals. Kovář describes James's peculiar habit:

When the hunt of a deer ended successfully [...] he jumped down from his horse, cut the throat of the hunted animal, put his hands into its entrails, and smeared with warm

blood the faces of the courtiers who had accompanied him. (2001:17, my translation)³⁸

But, not only animals: James also enjoyed torturing people. In 1591, he personally supervised the torture of poor wretches caught up in the witchcraft trials of Scotland, with James even suggesting new forms of torture to the inquisitors (Stephen Butters, 1999, internet source). It is suggested though that his love of torture can be attributed to his tutor, George Buchanan, for whom ‘beating was not just a matter of discipline but of satisfaction. At the end of his life the king still had nightmares about [Buchanan]’ (Oxford Dictionary). James’s childhood certainly was not an easy one; however, growing up he was ‘highly educated’, which he himself recognized.

3.2.2. The great scholar

James considered himself a great scholar, which could be one of the reasons why writing a play for him was such a complicated matter. He often remarked that ‘they gar me speik Latin ar I could speik Scotis’ (G. F. Warner and J. P. Gilson, 1921:xxviii). Scottish though was vital for James, as he saw himself as an important part of Scottish history; as confirmed by Wright: ‘Certainly Shakespeare intended to flatter King James I by his characterization of his ancestor, Banquo’ (1960:xiv), who was believed, at the time *Macbeth* was written, to be the founder of the Stuart dynasty. Also, the belief in ‘the divine right of kings’ – the belief that, since a king’s power came from God, the king had to answer to none but God – was voiced with equal vehemence by James:

While Shakespeare arguably indirectly inserted his beliefs into his fiction, King James wrote directly about his convictions in both *The Basilicon Doron* (1599) and *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598). The books of King James undoubtedly enhanced and reaffirmed Shakespeare’s already developed ideas on kingship, specifically, that the usurpation or regicide of a righteously titled ruler was wrong without exception’ (Amanda Mabillard, 2000, internet source).

Kenneth Muir asserts that ‘James I would not have approved of an unflattering portrait of his reputed ancestor’ (2004:lvi); yet, he would not have approved of the faintest breath of any supporting voice of ‘rebellion even against manifest tyrants’ (Kenneth Muir, 2004:lvi). As he says in *The True Law of Free Monarchies*,

The wickednesse therefore of the King can neuer make them that are ordained to be iudged by him, to become his Iudges ... Next, in place of relieuing the commonwealth out of distresse (which is their onely excuse and colour) they shall heape double distresse and desolation vpon it; and so their rebellion shall procure the contrary effects that they pretend it for. (Kenneth Muir, 2004:lvi-ii)

For him, even a ‘bad king’ was a ‘needed king’ if the country was to be ruled, and only God could judge the deeds of a king. No other living creature had the right to do so. James had strong opinions on many subjects and wrote many works, many of them considered to have been written in a very quality style. His impact on English literature is certainly considerable, not least because of his encouragement of and participation in the translation of the Bible into English. Nevertheless, this new translation of the Bible was probably realized simply because the marginal notes in the Geneva Bible had annoyed James: ‘It did not conform to his strong belief in “the divine rights of kings”’ (Michael H. Brown, 1988, internet source).

Although a scholar, James did not escape a belief in the supernatural; however, this belief was probably not as unequivocal as has been assumed. Supposedly, James ‘met a notorious witch when he was in Aberdeen in 1589’, but the witch ‘seemed to hold much terror or even interest for him’. However, the situation changed ‘overnight, with the spectacular discovery of a coven at North Berwick which was purportedly in league with the devil to destroy the king, his greatest enemy on earth’ (Oxford Dictionary). It is quite surprising that, even after this revelation, James remained quite sceptical about the supernatural. However, his view changed quite a bit when one of the witches, in conversation with James, retold him the dialogue between himself and his wife Anne on their wedding night in Oslo. After his conversation with the Berwick witch and his book on the subject, James turned ‘into the royal demonologist’ – nevertheless, ‘it is a much exaggerated reputation’ (Oxford Dictionary). It is even suggested that

when Shakespeare used Macbeth’s witches, as recounted by the early sixteenth century scholar Hector Boece, to flatter the new king, he wrote a magnificent play; but he mistook his target. (Oxford Dictionary)

Some scholars certainly do not agree with this view. Peter Thomson, for example, argues differently, claiming that ‘Shakespeare may not have dug so far into witchcraft as James I, but he does nothing in *Macbeth* to contradict the superstitious’ (1983:141). It is surely hard to judge whether or not Shakespeare really intended to flatter King James by the inclusion of the witches, or if James even picked up the allusions of such in the play and enjoyed them; but, it holds true that he saw the play and neither fell asleep nor complained. So, if mistook, the target could not have been overly missed.

3.2.3. James’s historical representation

James was not just a scholar expressing his opinions and belief on various topics: he sometimes contradicted what he believed in or even what he did. James, for example, preferred young boys to women, although he was married and fathered five children. Despite laws against homosexual acts at that time, it would probably be misleading to think of homosexuals in the period as oppressed, simply because they would not have seen themselves as a group, or as having rights. 'Though it was a well-kept secret, rumours of James's homosexual tendencies abounded; ironically, he wrote sternly against its practice in one of his own works, *Basilicon Doron*' (Best, 1998, internet source). André Maurois describes one of James's most notorious affairs, that with George Villiers, who made an incredibly swift career. Maurois claims that nothing more interesting to read exists than the letters between James and his lover and his son from their secret journey to Spain. The 'boys' apparently started the letters by '*Dear Dad and Gossip*' and close them by '*Your baby and dog*' (1993:244).

There is much more to be said about James; however, from what has been said, it is clear that James was an extremely unconventional and problematic monarch. His belief in all that '*Rex est Lex*' could be extended to mean proved a very good way to reign ... but only in Scotland. In England, the Parliament was offended by this attitude, and it caused some great disputes between James and the government. He also was an exceptional scholar with an exquisite literary style; but, on the other hand, he negated his own words in areas such as 'homosexuality' by keeping male lovers of his own. Put simply, King James saw being King as being above the laws applicable to his subjects. Also, the historical evidence preserved till now appears to be quite inconsistent, since some spoke about James in flattering and some in very unflattering terms. Kovář quotes Sir Anthony Weldone, who describes James as fearful, with a tongue too big for his mouth and a sparse beard – a description which sounds very negative. However, there are also very flattering descriptions such as that by Arthur Wilson, who remembers the monarch to be 'rather tall than short, well built although a bit corpulent, but healthy' and also 'very attractive, jolly, and kind' (2001:12-13)³⁹. Writing a play for a ruler who had such contradictions and inconsistencies was certainly an extremely complex task; however, as usually, Shakespeare mastered it and pleased his new monarch.

3.3. The play

Contrary to *Richard III*, which was created simply to entertain Queen Elizabeth I, *Macbeth* was written to flatter the new monarch James I. This is evident in the fact that

Macbeth is full of direct compliments paid to James, while there are basically no direct compliments to be found in *Richard III*. This is hardly surprising after what has been said about both monarchs. From this point of view, the plays are rather different; however, as has been said before, the basic structure of the plays is very similar, although *Macbeth* is one of Shakespeare's shortest plays, which is probably due to 'James's history of falling asleep during many previous performances' that were too long (Michael Best, internet source).

Both protagonists, Richard and Macbeth, are undoubtedly pictured as villains, although Richard presents himself as a monster from the very beginning, while Macbeth reaches the track of villainy rather gradually. It is also noteworthy that Richard speaks almost one-third of the lines in his play, and the same holds true for Macbeth. The lines in *Macbeth* were counted for the purpose of this diploma paper, which revealed that Macbeth also speaks almost one-third of the lines, almost 780 out of some 2,300 lines. It is obvious then that both characters hold the same importance in their plays, although neither of them fully directs the plot. They both also suffer from feelings of guilt (especially after killing the children of their enemies), and are subsequently unable to sleep peacefully. They both gradually lose all the people around themselves that they care for, and their lives are ended at the point of absolute isolation. They both die alone on the battlefield – though, in the case of Macbeth, it might be more properly said that the battle literally came to him. In the same way, both plays end with a picture of a better future, as the villains and usurpers are dispatched, and the new ruler brings new hopes for England in the first and for Scotland in the latter play. It is really quite interesting that the two plays resemble each other in so many points, especially since they were written for two, very different monarchs. However, Shakespeare apparently knew what he was doing, as both plays were well accepted by the monarchs and audiences alike.

3.3.1. The choice of the topic

To write a play for James I which would not offend but please was a truly demanding task, as all his eccentricities and preferences had to be remembered; yet, it was also not advisable to include material in which James I had been personally involved. Shakespeare's company had earlier experienced a situation in which they unintentionally offended the new monarch with a play, when, as Peter Thompson asserts, 'they had come a cropper in 1604 with the play about the Gowry conspiracy' (1983:137). Given the Act that banned depictions of living monarchs, it seems strange that Shakespeare's company chose material closely connected with James; however, the situation was more complicated, since, as Thomson

continues, ‘not to perform something in which James might see his own reflection could have been viewed as a sin of omission’ (1983:137). So, in writing *Macbeth*, Shakespeare chose his material carefully: picturing eleventh-century Scotland was surely a good choice. After the experiences associated with bringing the Gowry conspiracy to the stage, Shakespeare ‘made assurance doubly sure by editing Holinshed’ (1983:137) – one of his main sources for writing the play – to ascertain what would flatter his new patron.

One of the major changes in *Macbeth* is the role and character of Banquo, which differs considerably from the description in Holinshed’s *Chronicles*. It is not difficult to find the reason, as Banquo was one of the characters that had to be treated with closest attention, as he was, in the Jacobean period, believed to be James I’s distant ancestor. James was a Stuart, and it was believed that he ‘was descended from a Norman named Walter Fitz Alan, who was a steward to King David I of Scotland’ (Barbara Fitzsenry, 2001, internet source). The first Stuart King of Scotland, Robert II, was a descendant from the old Scottish royal family through his mother. As it was a bit embarrassing that the great King and scholar descended from a steward, a different myth arose, revealing that the Stuarts were, in fact, the successors of Banquo, a Thane of Lochaber according to Holinshed. In both texts – Shakespeare’s play and Holinshed’s *Chronicles* – Banquo is initially a noble soldier fighting at Macbeth’s side. The Captain in the play, when speaking about Macbeth and Banquo, uses fairly flattering words:

As sparrows eagles, or the hare the lion.
If I say sooth, I must report they were
As cannons overcharg’d with double cracks. (I.ii.35-37)

Holinshed reports that Banquo later became an accomplice in the murder of King Duncan:

At length therefore, communicating his purposed intent with his trustie friends, amongst whome Banquo was the chiefest, vpon confidence of their promised aid, he slue the King. (*Chronicles*, 269)

Shakespeare, in contrast, presents Banquo as noble and blameless throughout the play, unaware of the bloody deeds of Macbeth and his wife, Lady Macbeth. As Peter Thomson says: ‘Shakespeare muffles any hint of Banquo’s collaboration in the killing of the king’ (1983:142). Such muffling was necessary, since Shakespeare and his company could hardly have benefited from portraying James’s ancestor as an accomplice in the murder of a Scottish king: thus, all blame was laid upon Macbeth. As Kenneth Muir also asserts, King Duncan is, in Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, ‘younger than in the play, and he is depicted as a

feeble ruler'. By the editing of this, Muir continues, Shakespeare 'deliberately blackened the guilt of Macbeth' (2004:xxxvi).

Shakespeare suppressed other things as well. For example, the statement from Holinshed praising King Makbeth for ten years of good rule, during which he felt safe enough in his position to undergo a pilgrimage to Rome, to leave his well-led country for a few months without fear:

If he had attained therevnto by rightfull means, and continued in vprightnesse of iustice as he began, till the end of his reigne, he might well have beene numbered amongst the most noble princes that anie where had reigned. (*Chronicles*, 270)

In the *Chronicles* relating to King Makbeth, Holinshed also provides a section about Makbeth's wife. Shakespeare, according to Muir, would have read that '[Makbeth's] wife lay sore upon him to attempt the thing, as she was verie ambitious, burning in unquenchable desire to beare the name of a queene' (2004:xxxix). Ambitious Lady Macbeth was not Shakespeare's creation either: he was re-working Holinshed. However, there are some motives that Shakespeare adopted only partially, changing them to better suit his play; there are some created fully by Shakespeare, in the same way as in *Richard III*, for purely dramatic purposes.

3.3.2. 'Women' in the play

By the first scene, Shakespeare seems to establish the true nature of the play. In *Richard III*, he points out his monstrous machiavellian figure and foretells the consequent bloody deeds of the play; in *Macbeth*, he opens with the image of three witches, which, since people were confused and scared by the supernatural, probably evoked in the public the feeling of ominous evil, certainly supernatural and devilish: so, they probably expected some kind of treason or 'dirtiness' from the beginning.

The witches though were also employed because of James, who was said to be 'the royal demonologist', although a bit unrightfully. Nonetheless, there is clear evidence for Shakespeare employing the witches because of his monarch. The scene describes an act of vengeance directed against the sailor-husband of a woman who refused to give the witch some of the chestnuts she was shelling. The vengeance was completed by the husband's drowning:

I Witch. Here I have a pilot's thumb,
Wrack'd, as homeward he did come. (I.iii.28-29)

According to Thomson, Shakespeare made here ‘some oblique reference to James I’s adventures with the North Berwick witches during the winter 1589-90’ (1983:143). He explains further that there was a storm that threatened James’s ship and one of the witches, accused of having raised the storm, confessed that ‘they had sailed out to sea in a sieve to drown a cat’ (1983:143). James had taken part in the subsequent examination and would definitely have picked up any allusions of that in *Macbeth*. However, even without picking up these allusions, it should be remembered that the number of the weird sisters was quite an important matter. As had already been seen in *Richard III*, the number three was, for the audience, a sign that the women in *Richard III* (who are analogous to the witches in this play) have the ability to prophesy. As was shown, the prophecy was crucial in *Richard III*, and is so as well in *Macbeth*, as he drawn by the prophecy to do things that went against his initial qualities as a soldier, a subject, and a man.

The nature of the witches remains unclear. Scholars, Peter Thomson claims, have ‘sought to distinguish between witches, fairies, nymphs, weird sisters, even the classical Furies and the Scandinavian Norns’ (1983:140). Banquo helps to solve the problem of their looks by his description of them:

Banquo. That look not like th’ inhabitants o’th’earth,
 And yet are on’t? Live you? Or are you aught
 That man may question? You seem to understand me,
 By each at once her choppy finger laying
 Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,
 And yet your beard forbid me to interpret
 That you are so. (I.iii.40-47)

However, more problematic than their looks is whether these weird sisters actually ‘planted the seeds of evil in Macbeth’ (Muir, 2004:xxxv), or whether he had decided to kill the King long before. Kenneth Muir asserts that Macbeth had to decide about the murder himself, because ‘they have no power over the innocent’ (2004:xxxv). However, looking at the actual play, it seems that, contrary to the from-the-first-soliloquy-a-monster Richard, Macbeth really is innocent, having initially been introduced as a noble hero and a brave warrior, who is tempted to reach the crown only after his talk with the witches – or, to be more specific, after the first prophecy is fulfilled. Until then, Macbeth thinks that he does not have to do anything to become the King:

[*Aside*] If Chance will have me King, why, Chance
 may crown me,
 Without my stir. (I.iii.142-144)

These words certainly do not evoke a person who would have ambitions like Richard III had, to slaughter his way to the throne. Such lines continue to appear even after Macbeth's first meeting with the witches. It is true, however, that just a scene later, the situation changes, when Macbeth asks stars to 'hide their fires', lest the heavens see his dark thoughts:

Macbeth. Let not light see my black and deep desires;
The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be,
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see. (I.iv.51-53)

Clearly enough, Macbeth, at this point, wishes to become the King – which stands in contrast to the claims of some scholars that the main decision is only made by Lady Macbeth, who pressures her husband into killing King Duncan.

It surely holds true that Lady Macbeth appears alone on stage in the first indoor scene of the play, as the first character emphasizing her importance in the play. However, the importance may not reside in her pushing the cowardly Macbeth into becoming a murderer. She seems to appear in the play more as Macbeth's conscience. At the beginning of the play, when Macbeth seems uncertain of whether he really wants or can perform the murder, she, reading the letter containing this news, wishes him to come swiftly so that she can transmit some of her spirit to him:

Lady Macbeth. Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear. (I.v.25-26)

These can be just the words of an ambitious wife, just as when she soothes Macbeth, who, after committing the murder, is starting to be hunted by feelings of guilt. She though stays cool-headed and absolutely in control, advising:

These deeds must not be thought
After these ways: so, it will make us mad. (II.ii.32-33)

It can be seen that his conscience is still fighting with the decision to reach the throne in this way; however, when he gets into the situation when staying on the throne means killing many more people, including his friend Banquo, who was promised to father future Kings, Macbeth feels his guilt so strongly that his conscience starts to suffer. However, there is no way back, as 'blood will have blood' (III.iv.121). Macbeth gradually separates from his wife completely: it seems that he has enough to solve himself to have his guilty conscience with him. Lady Macbeth keeps languishing; and, at the end, when Macbeth spends his final fight trying to look brave but seems to shiver with uncertainty, Seyton comes to announce the death of Lady Macbeth. Macbeth's reaction to this is rather surprising: he does not react as a

loving husband, but more like a person furious over the loss of something vital for his situation:

She should have died hereafter:
There would have been a time for such a word. (V.v.17-18)

Losing his guilty conscience seems like something positive; however, it seems to be one of the last things that a person can lose, and might evoke the tragic end of the tragic hero that is to come very soon.

3.3.3. The mirror impressions

Even if, as is argued by some scholars, Shakespeare overvalued the importance of the witches and their impact on James, he certainly included a greatly flattering scene in the play involving a mirror. This act of flattery appears in the scene which is often argued as coming directly from the quill of Shakespeare himself – however, there seems to be reasons for questioning this. The Hecate scene fits into the play perfectly; and, as Shakespeare really was a master of impressing, he would certainly want to include a masque-like scene for a monarch who loved this kind of dramatization.

After having Banquo murdered, Macbeth visits the Weird Sisters again in their cave, as he wants to make sure that his position is now no longer endangered. At first, he is soothed; however, at the end a display of eight Kings appears, the first being Banquo, and the last with a glass in his hand. Macbeth cries:

And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass,
Which shows me many more; and some I see,
That two-fold balls and tremble sceptres carry.
Horrible sight! (IV.i.119-122)

It might have been a horrible sight for Macbeth, but it seems to have been a great compliment paid to James I, as Peter Thomson explains:

An effect that is visible only to the actors is not an effect at all. There is a fascinating possibility that, in the Hampton Court performance of 1606, the silent presenter of the eighth king held the mirror in front of James I himself, the latest guarantee of the continuing Stuart line. (1983:154)

As a proud descendant of the Stuart Dynasty, James would certainly have appreciated this scene. Shakespeare though does not end here and continues with other symbols flattering the King, symbols James would surely not miss.

3.3.4. Other symbols

With *Macbeth*, Shakespeare created one of his darkest plays; and he, of course, again employs ‘the contrast between light and darkness [that] symbolizes a general contrast between good and evil, devils and angels, hell and heaven’ (Muir, 2004:xliv). As in most of his plays, he also includes comic relief, as in the scene with the Porter, which follows the scene of the murder of King Duncan, and in which, to emphasize the bloody deeds, ‘the owl, demonic bird, hoots, from the north, the devil’s side’ (Thomson, 1983:147). The Porter appears on the stage after someone begins knocking at the castle gate, with the knocking coming from ‘the south entry, the God’s side’ (1983:147). The whole Porter’s scene is quite short; and, although it should have served as comic relief, Thomson asserts that ‘the Porter’s language invited the Jacobean audience to remember the old pageants of the harrowing of Hell, and the knocking at Hell-gate that presages heavenly judgement’ (1983:147). Many general symbolic meanings could be uncovered in the play; however, there are some more that were probably included purely because of the presence of James I in the audience.

As mention before, colours became an inseparable part of court masques, and Shakespeare again did not fail to use them. In the military scene of Act Five, he used the flags of the countries where, as Macbeth ‘has usurped Scottish colours, Malcolm may have borrowed the English’ – according to Thomson, this carried ‘a point about the uniting of the countries under James VI and I’ which James surely ‘would not miss’ (1983:156). Not only colour carried important symbolic meaning in this Act. In the scene, where the crown is placed on Malcolm’s head, Macduff greets the new King with following:

Macduff. Hail King! for so thou art. Behold, where stands
 Th’ usurper’s cursed head: the time is free.
 I see thee compass’d with thy kingdom’s pearl,
 That speak my salutation in their minds;
 Whose voices I desire aloud with mine, –
 Hail, King of Scotland!

All. Hail, King of Scotland! (V.ix.20-26)

Thomson finds this scene very important, as he supposes that ‘the actor who played Macduff [...] would have known how, by graceful gesture, to include both the king on the stage and the King in the audience’ (1983:159-60). Hence, this was a great scene and an even greater compliment paid to the King. Again, just as *Richard III* ends with Henry VII’s rescue of England from a bloody monster, *Macbeth* ends with the rightful defeat of the usurper who wanted to prevent the Stuarts from ascending the throne, an act which was deservedly punished. Since the King’s beliefs were supported by the play, both the author and the monarch must have left the theatre completely satisfied.

4. Conclusion

Richard. I shall despair. There is no creature loves me,
And if I die, no soul will pity me –
And wherefore should they, since that I myself
Find in myself no pity to myself?
Me thought the souls of all that I had murder'd
Came to my tent, and every one did threat
Tomorrow's vengeance on the head of Richard. (V.iii. 201-207)

Richard should certainly despair, since at the point of the delivery of these words, he is completely lonesome, already fully aware of his butchery deeds, and most importantly, he

is scared, which is remarkable for his personality. However, he appears not to be the only one caught in such situation.

Macbeth. Though Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane,
And thou oppos'd, being of no woman born,
Yet I will try the last: before my body
I throw my warlike shield: lay on, Macduff:
And damn'd be him that first cries, 'Hold, enough!' (V.ix. 30-34)

Macbeth is trying the last; clearly, like Richard, Macbeth despairs. The prophecies, made by witches, turned against him, there is no one to sympathize with him, his wife was announced to be dead, and he, just as Richard, was haunted by his victims. Nevertheless, the pitiful end, full, and guilty conscience, is not the only part in which the two plays, *Richard III* and *Macbeth*, are similar.

One of the most striking similarities appears to be the amount of the lines that the two protagonists speak. While *Richard III* is one of Shakespeare's longest plays, and *Macbeth* his shortest one, both protagonists alike speak one third of all the lines in the plays. This though can be one of the evidence that although, between 1592 and 1603, when the two plays were written, Shakespeare moved from the Medieval to Modern concept of the character, with '*Macbeth* [Shakespeare] revisits the issue of the villain-hero that [he] first addressed in *Richard III*' (Janis Lull, 1999:16).

Richard's 'mediavelity' lies in his similarity to Vice from morality plays; he communicates with the audience, most of the time speaking about himself as about the third person, as Martin Hilský asserts: 'Richard speaks about himself, as if he got out of himself and was telling to the viewer, what he sees' (Hilský, 2004:137, my translation)⁴⁰. He unfolds all his bloody plans openly from the very beginning, he sees himself as a villain and is also 'determined to prove a villain'. This Richard's intention thrives, as he surely proves an unmistakable villain, who believes (like majority of Elizabethans) that being bodily misshapen, he is as well mentally misshapen, which gives him no other chance than to plot his way to the happiness, which, for him, means to become the King. As a great warrior and a villain, who has

no delight to pass away the time,
unless to spy [his] shadow in the sun (I.i. 25-26),

he controls all the situations in which he appears. His ability to control all the situations might probably be attributed to his preparation for them, since he personally plots and prepares them, as his sharp mind keeps him ahead of everyone in the play. However, the minute he achieves the role that surely was not predestined for him, when he becomes the King, Richard

gradually fails to control forthcoming situations, and not being use to such a plight, in which he acts only as a puppet, not as a puppeteer, he loses the solid ground under his feet, and consequently ends lonesome, and finally defeated.

Macbeth, also a great warrior, is in essence a modern character; he does not speak to the audience but to himself, 'his soliloquies are introspective' (Martin Hilský, 2004:137, my translation)⁴¹. He is not 'determined to prove a villain' either; he seems to be a heroic captain fighting for his King, however, later is promised to become the Thane of Cawdor, and consequently the King, which turns him into the bloody deeds. His transformation is not immediate though. He, at first, hopes that 'if Chance will have [him] King, why, Chance may crown [him], without [his] stir' (I.iii.143-4), but soon after becoming the Thane of Cawdor, the promised kingdom lies heavy in his mind, and he starts pleading stars to 'hide [their] fires' not to 'see [his] black and deep desires' (I.iv. 50-1). Macbeth's ambition grows quickly, and after encouragement from his wife, he kills the King, and the loyal hero finally turns into a villain. There are some scholars though who doubt this gradual change and assert that the evil lay in Macbeth long before the prophecy. The truth is that witches have always been considered evil spirits, and if Macbeth was an unspoiled hero, he would not probably believed such prophesy originating from "the evil", and even if believed it, he certainly would not turn into evil villain so easily, and certainly would not kill. Nevertheless, if he was evil in heart before the prophesy and the change only came to surface, or if he really was a hero and turned the villain only after the prophesy, is not as important as the act of change itself, since this gradual, in a way psychological, change recedes Macbeth from the Medieval concept, and makes Macbeth the modern character. The concept of the two characters, Richard and Macbeth, appears quite different, but still, the plays in general remain fairly similar.

Clearing their way to the crown, and consequently securing it, both, Richard and Macbeth soak themselves deep into blood, since they have to dispose of their rivals. However, reaching their target, that gradually starts disappearing, they also slay the innocent ones - they both end up having the children of their enemies killed. Having this done though, they both realize that their situation is unbearable. At this point Richard contemplates:

Uncertain way of gain! But I am in
So far in blood that sin will pluck on sin. (IV.ii. 63-64)

As Janis Lull asserts 'Macbeth, contemplating the murders of Banquo and Fleance, repeats and expands Richard's figure' (1999:16):

All causes shall give way: I am in blood
Stepp'd in so far, that, should I wade no more,

Returning were as tedious as go o'er. (III.v. 135-7)

Not only do they contemplate their situation, they can never get any rest, since their bloody deeds prevent them from the peaceful sleep. These are certainly sufficient evidence that in *Macbeth* Shakespeare 'echoes, revises, and deepens *Richard III*' (Janis Lull, 1999:16). This has been long recognized, however, the question is 'Why these plays are so similar'. Was the similarity of the plays Shakespeare's aim or a mere coincidence?

The plays were written for two very dissimilar monarchs, Queen Elizabeth I and James I in two different periods, Elizabethan and Jacobean. Dramawise though these two periods varied mostly in the concept of character, concept of staging that started to play more significant role in the Jacobean period, and also in inclusion of masques. Audience did not change much during the time when the plays for Elizabeth and James were written, neither did their thinking, basic principles of the time, or the authors; basically, the only thing that changed obviously, were the monarchs, and many changes were applied because of them. With the accession of James I on the English throne, the new generation of authors had arisen, hence, if the old ones wanted to stay on the 'sunny side' they had to adjust to the newly favoured trends. Shakespeare always knew his audience and monarchs well, and although he might have not liked the changes, he made them, and was able to flatter both, Elizabeth and James. The other reason for Shakespeare to be able to please both monarchs may lie in the assumption that although dissimilar, both, Elizabeth and James, were equally controversial, although in different ways. Elizabeth decided not to get married, which, after the period of stability brought to England the feeling of uncertainty, James, even a bit more controversial, considered himself to be a great scholar, his personal life was quite stormy, and most importantly, he came from Scotland, which was one of the reasons for disputes between him and the parliament.

Based on this assumption, it seems logical that some parts of the plays remained more or less the same in both plays. Apart from the two main "villain" characters, also 'the recurring female-triad scenes of *Richard III* are echoed in *Macbeth* by the highly dramatic appearance of the three witches. In both plays, the women are associated with the destiny and supernatural. In *Richard III* old Queen Margaret is able to curse, and the other women later unify, to acquire the ability as well, in *Macbeth* Shakespeare uses the three witches; in Shakespeare's audience these threesomes with supernatural abilities certainly evoked the suspicion of some evil deeds, even if nothing have happened.

The women have clear influence on the development of the play, however, Richard and Macbeth surely are the characters in centre of attention, and they decide about their lives. Their decision causes though that in the end, both hero-villains remain alone, scared in a way, but still brave warriors fighting for their place in the world. Neither of the endings though stands as a pitiful end of two characters, by those ending Shakespeare mainly paid a great compliment to his monarchs. In *Richard III* Shakespeare complimented Queen Elizabeth, as the latest of the Tudor monarchs. In the dream of Richard and Richmond, the ghosts of the murdered princes predict that Richmond will survive the battle 'and beget a happy race of kings' (V.iii.158), one of them, of course, Queen herself. The greatest compliment to James I is paid a bit earlier in the play, in a mirror moment in the Hecate scene, in which the witches show Macbeth a line of future kings, who will spring from Banquo, mythical founder of the Stuarts. Despite their difference, the two monarchs were in a way so similar that they both would appreciate most the same compliment. It could be probably stated that both plays are similar to the extent to which were similar both monarchs.

Writing two plays flattering for two monarchs coming from two different dynasties appears to be quite a simple task, however, to accomplish the task successfully surely required a genius. Hence, Shakespeare should certainly be considered a genius playwright, not only because he was a master of fashioning, and so his plays were appreciated by the audience in his time, but also because his plays survived centuries and still have the power to bedazzle and address the present audience, although the thinking and the way of life changed considerably.

2. Elizabethan and Jacobean period

In considering literary works, it is necessary to look at the economic, political and cultural aspects of each period: speaking about the two plays *Richard III* and *Macbeth*, these areas of the sixteenth and seventeenth century will be considered. These areas will not be analysed thoroughly however: the only aspects crucial to emphasise are cultural changes during each period, namely theatre staging, style and structure, and also some of the authors writing in the above-mentioned periods.

1.1. Elizabethan and Jacobean playhouses

1.1.1. Development of professional companies in England

Generally, the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods were literarywise extremely fruitful, which, however, does not hold true in the case of Elizabethan stage design: there was basically no scenery, and actors tended to explain many things they were doing. Certainly, as Micheal Hattway points out, 'Elizabethan playhouses were not designed for *illusions*' (2002:12). Moreover, although various plays had been performed for many generations, as G.B.Harrison claims 'no permanent playhouse was erected in England until 1576' (1965:9). The exactness of this assertion can be questioned though, as in some chronologies the first open theatre is claimed to be the Red Lion, already providing performances in 1566. However, this variance makes no difference to the fact that, in Tudor England, groups of strolling players toured the country performing plays in the courtyards of inns, and that some temporary companies were attached to the households of noblemen, so 'there was no question of constructing scenic likenesses of palace rooms, formal gardens or fields for battle'

(Michael Hattaway, 2002:12). Nonetheless, the government began to fear the strolling actors: firstly, they could spread plague; and secondly, among the most popular subjects of the plays were stories such as Robin Hood, which the government worried would encourage people to remonstrate against monarchy. As Alois Bejblík claims, already 'in 1533 the crown issued a ban of all interludes concerning all controversial topics. Some moralities satirized Luther and some even cardinal Wolsey' (1979:134, my translation)¹. Eventually, the English government stopped approving of strolling players; and, in 1572, Queen Elizabeth even passed a law banning strolling companies fully, and actually vagrancy in general. The ban, as Bejblík suggests, 'threatened detected vagabonds by whipping and piercing of the right ear, in case of repetition of the offence by death, loss of estate, withholding of a priest and sanctified ground' (1979:136, my translation)², so eventually only companies with formal patronage remained viable. The consequent direct outgrowth of the bans caused the change of amateur companies into the professional ones; 'since 1574 the acting was mentioned in the official documents as workmanship, profession and art' (Bejblík, 1979:142, my translation)³. In the situation when the company gained the formal patronage, the noblemen, whose support the actors had were held responsible for the content of the plays; and logically, it was strictly prohibited to include any material against the living monarch or the country; however, as the Tudors were such great propagandists, the plays embellishing them were certainly not banned, as will be shown in the case of Queen Elizabeth. Concerning the period bans of the strolling companies, exemplarily, the court itself accommodated to the new establishment, and the amateur courtiers who originally performed the court plays and masques were replaced by professional companies and their plays. A sharer in one of those companies - known as the Lord Chamberlain's company, and after the accession of James I to the English throne, as the King's Men, as the company was given the ruler's personal patronage - was William Shakespeare. Interestingly, even after the law was passed, the various dissensions between actors and officials continued, and eventually, after the actors were basically banished from the City, they strayed to the south of the Thames, where the Mayor's of London authority did not reach, and started building the first permanent playhouses. G.B.Harrison notes:

In the 1570's the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London and the players were constantly at variance. As a result James Burbage, then the leader of the great Earl of Leicester's players, decided that he would erect a playhouse outside the jurisdiction of the Lord Mayor, where the players would no longer be hindered by the authorities. Accordingly in 1576 he built the Theatre in Shoreditch, at that time a suburb of London. (1965:9)

As 'the Theatre experiment proved to be successful' (Harrison, 1965:9), more playhouses were open in the London area in the following years, including the Curtain playhouse (in 1577), the Rose (in 1587), the Fortune Theatre (in 1600) and also, the presently most famous, certainly because it was built by the company in which Shakespeare, popular already at the Elizabethan period, was a one tenth shareholder, the Globe (in 1599).

1.1.2. Playhouse building and staging

Although the theatre companies became professionalized, the newly constructed Elizabethan playhouses still did not offer satisfactory conditions for splendid stage design. It is not difficult to imagine the reasons, as sketches (see appendix 2) and pictures of the theatres still exist, as does one of the theatres, at least as a hypothetical reproduction. Although the present Globe in London is only a copy, it resembles the original Globe which was in use until 1613 when the roof caught fire during one of the performances and the building burned to the ground. The news of Globe burning down spreaded in London and the event is possible to trace from some period records. Sir Henry Wotton, for instance, portrayed it in a letter to his cousin, remarking that:

When King Henry entered the house of cardinal Wolsey [...] a few cannons fired fusillade, [and] one paper [...] was projected on the thatched roof. At first it only seemed as some harmless smoke and people kept watching the spectacle on the stage with attention. Then the inner part caught fire and everything started up as a comet, so the whole house burnt to the ground in less than half an hour. (Bejblík, 1979:179, my translation)⁴

From the history retrieve, it is possible to say that all the playhouses were usually circular or hexagonal, with a place for musicians, since songs and music were inseparable elements of most plays. The whole yard was open to the air, so that light would be allowed in, which meant that, naturally, performances were held in the afternoon, because there was no artificial lighting. There was no curtain concealing the whole stage either, so all scenes began with an entrance and ended with an exit of the characters. As mentioned above, there was no scenery, which may seem incomprehensible to present viewers who are used to vast change in scenery within a play, or sometimes even within separate acts and scenes. However, the possibility of extensive scenery change flourished only after the use of modern technologies, and certainly use of artificial lightning, which enables the quick scenery transformation without disruptive interruption of the play. None of these though were available in the two considered periods, and so the scenery was limited. Nonetheless, this situation appears advantageous in a way, as therefore the playwrights were not limited by the

number of scenes. If the placement of the scene was somehow important for the play, it was evoked in dialogue. It is also unclear how actors were dressed, but 'it seems most likely that basic costumes were Elizabethan with some token costumes – long medieval shoes, for example – to mark historical difference' (Michael Hattway, 2002:12).

The little space for illusions though did not discourage the audience; the interest in theatre was truly enormous. Joy Hancox asserts that, 'by 1595 over 15,000 people a week were attending plays being performed in London theatres' (internet source). Such an amount of theatre goers meant a great need for space: yet, it was not a problem in Elizabethan London. There were enough playhouses in the London area, and each could hold several thousand people; 'due to de Witt's entry from 1596 the Swan theatre could hold up to three thousand seated spectators' (Bejblík, 1979:210, my translation)⁵. Most spectators though, who viewed the performance standing for only a penny admission, surrounded the stage from three sides. If the viewers had paid 'the amount from six pence to one shilling' they could sit down 'either on the stage, or in galleries, that were as a reminiscence of the original inns divided into small rooms, and from that the present loge probably emerged' (André Maurois, 1993:226, my translation)⁶. It is evident that the same playhouse held the people from different social background. Alexander Leggatt asserts that 'public playhouses catered to a mixed audience', if nothing else, 'the price structure would suggest' that (1992, internet source). Despite the little staging the playhouses were apparently suitable for the audience, and however little space was used for illusions, many symbols conveying or illuminating the meaning of the play were used. As Michael Hattaway writes: 'Courts were represented not with painted scenery but by appropriate varieties of theatrical ritual: processions, music, formal speech' (2002:12), which may occasionally be a bit problematic for present theatre goers, who are not aware of such rituals; truly, some rituals or even hidden religious or political remarks are hardly understandable and traceable for a non-Elizabethan viewer.

Nonetheless, if the scene design was, as has been suggested, not greatly important in the Elizabethan playhouses, this cannot be asserted in the case of the Jacobean court. After the accession of James I to the English throne, a new generation of artists also appeared, a generation partly formed because of James's theatrical taste. The most important of these being Indigo Jones, an architect, sculptor, painter, and in words of Martin Kovář 'eager promoter of Italian cultural tradition [...] stood out fully only after the accession of Stuarts' (2001:52, my translation)⁷. English masques became very popular. As D.M.Bergeron writes, although 'scattered examples of indoor *court masque* exist in the Tudor era, masques truly become a fixture in the Stuart court' (2002:42). This interest in masques was also

caused partly because members of the court acted in them. It is even said that 'in 1609 Queen Anne herself, accompanied by six countesses and five maids, acted in the masque called *Masque of Queen*' (Kovář, 2001:53, my translation)⁸. Partly because 'masques included dazzling technical effects, dance, and music (Bergeron, 2002:42), these performances, contrary to the Elizabethan stage, required authors to be 'concentrated mainly on the most imaginative construction of the scene, stage setting and costumes' (Kovář, 2001:52, my translation)⁹. Ben Jonson, one of the most popular authors of masques, and his contemporaries cooperated 'with England's most distinguished architect, Indigo Jones, in designing the increasingly elaborate staging on which court spent vast sums of money' (Bergeron, 2002:42). This certainly does not imply that Shakespeare and his contemporaries lost their position in the Jacobean theatre world: however, changes and developments in stage design influenced some of their plays. Nonetheless, more influential than any of these technicalities of the theatre was the changing form of the theatre plays produced at that time.

1.2. Elizabethan and Jacobean playwriting

1.2.1. Influential theatre forms, rituals and symbols

In general, Elizabethan as well as Jacobean plays, not only those of Shakespeare, were more or less influenced by the tradition from which they had arisen, by the sources of information on which they were based, and also by the current political situation in which they were written. While scholars have disagreed about the direct influence of Seneca on Elizabethan drama, Janis Lull points out that

certainly Elizabethan revenge tragedy shares many conventions with the plays of Seneca, including, as James E. Ruoff lists them, 'the revenge theme, the ghosts, the play-within-the play, the dumb show, the soliloquy, the declaration and bombast, the emphasis on macabre brutalities, insanity and suicide'. (1999:8)

One can really trace all of these in Elizabethan plays: elaborate speeches, violence and horror onstage, characters who are dominated by a single, obsessive passion, or an interest in the supernatural. Yet, prior English dramatic forms, such as mystery and morality plays, also contributed their influence to the plays of the Elizabethan period. The playwrights had to, at least partly, adjust the plays to the expectations of their audience that 'was used to places changing and action onstage from the mystery plays' (Michael Best, 1998, internet source). At the same time, the leading and most popular character of most morality plays was Vice, who played tricks on the Virtues and other Vices alike. Vice took up most of the stage time, and often ended by fighting with the other Vices and was banished to Hell at the end of the

play. According to Lull, Vice, in its changed form, could be seen onstage even in the plays of Elizabethan authors. Lull explains that 'to the delight of spectators, the Vice would introduce himself and his schemes directly' at the beginning of the performance. The same can actually be seen, for example, in *Richard III*, where Richard in his first soliloquy explains that he is 'determined to prove a villain', then continues by explaining his plans, and, of course, is then 'doomed to Hell' (1999:8) at the end of the play.

Other very common characters in Elizabethan plays are women able to prophesy. Looking at the plays carefully, if the prophesying women are present onstage, there is always a group of three in some shape. According to Lull, 'the prophesying women in the play have links to characters in both classical and English drama' (1999:9). The group of three women either suggests the tradition of

the Resurrection plays, specifically the motif of the three Marys – Mary Magdalene, Mary Salome and Mary the mother of James – at the tomb of Jesus. The three Marys formed part of the native theatrical heritage for playwrights and playgoers of Shakespeare's generation. (1999:9)

Or they can 'be compared to (...) Helena, Andromache and Hecuba in Seneca's *Troades*' (1999:9). Taking into account *Richard III*, there are three women - the Dutchess, Elizabeth and Anne - and three witches appear in *Macbeth*. Moreover, the Elizabethan period was influenced by Calvinism and its 'emphasis on predestination', so 'these associations must have suggested' that the prophesying 'women in the play are not only on the side of right, but also on the side of destiny' (Lull, 1999:10).

Besides that, some other symbols and rituals were used, such as the colours: as stated in Martin Kovář's *Stuartovská Anglie*, colours were especially important for Jacobean masques. Kovář asserts that 'Jones and his colleagues paid great attention to the choice of colours' (2001:53, my translation)¹⁰, and in his book continues by explaining the symbolic meaning of the colours that were used. Other symbolical meanings were included in the symbol of the sun or shadow, sounds coming from the north side (believed to be the devil's side), the hooting of the owl, the demonic bird, or other animals, evoking various symbolism such as 'lambs evoking physical deformity, a boar, a loathsome symbol of savagery and demonic forces, or a hog, a beast that stands for impurity and lechery' (Besnault, Bitot, 2002:111-112). Characters were, in the words of Micheal Hattway, often depicted as 'the totally unscrupulous bogeymen' (2002:8) who were based on the Machiavelan tradition. 'Machiavel', as Hattway claims further,

derives from Protestant writing against Italianate vice rather than from any real comprehension of the writings of Niccoló Machiavelli who lived well after the death of Henry VI. (2002:8)

All these symbols, rituals and symbolic characteristics of figures in the plays were certainly employed, partly because of the theatre tradition created over the years, and as the way of adjusting scenes in Elizabethan plays instead of scenery. It probably also indicated to the audience the way in which they could expect the plot and the characters to develop.

1.2.2. History plays

However great the influence of Calvinism, and various symbols, Senecan tragedy was also influential, as Hattway suggests: 'The earlier plays owe as much to Seneca as to the chronicles of English history' (2002:8). Indeed English drama before the sixteenth century often dramatized biblical stories or lives of the saints, and the battle between human's virtues and vices was at the centre of attention. English histories, which became very popular in the Elizabethan period, were narratives usually centring around the reign of a monarch, and ending by their death. Clearly enough, the Elizabethan histories cannot be viewed from the present perspective. Most of the people in the Elizabethan period were uneducated, or had only a basic education from the 'petty' schools. 'By the end of the sixteenth century, about one third of the male population and only one tenth of the female, most originating from the aristocracy or the arising middle class, could read' (Michael Best, 1998, internet source). Nonetheless, even if they were literate, it was impossible for a common person to borrow a history book from a private library, open it and find exact historical dates, facts, or personalities, which meant that the playwright could, as Hattway certifies, 'count on a minimal knowledge of historical events in his audience and he represented these in various ways' (2002:7). Although Hattway is probably correct an author's benevolent changes of history were more likely caused by the chronicles of English history that were available at that time, and partly by playwright's choice of the historical topic and its careful handling, as none wanted to fall into disgrace before the nobility or even the monarch.

Indeed, handling the topic carefully was one of the most important skills for the playwright. Historywise, deliberation was significant, as 'the ban on portraying living monarchs' (Hoenselaars, 2002:29) existed and the ruler would certainly not tolerate any assault of their family members or any predecessors either. However vigilant though, the playwrights sometimes offended their ruler. In 1604, for example, even the King's Men 'had come a cropper, when a play about the Gowry conspiracy had given offence; but Gowry was

recent history, in which James had been personally involved' (Peter Thomson, 1983:137). Yet, in the same way, as including a living monarch in a play was perilous, 'not to perform something in which' the monarch 'might see his own reflection could have been viewed as a sin of omission' (Thomson 1983:137). The choice was extremely problematic and that is probably one of the reasons, for Shakespeare's decision to, 'with the exception of *Henry VIII*, cover the history [that] invariably antedates 1485' (Hoenselaars, 2002:29). Many of Shakespeare's contemporaries though 'continued beyond the end of the Wars of the Roses, and they developed a wide variety of plays using materials bearing on the more recent Tudor era' (Hoenselaars, 2002:29). Some of them, 'as a partial consequence of their readiness to exploit Tudor history', Hoenselaars writes further, 'developed the biographical history plays'. The biographical plays, as David Loades in his article 'The Early Reception' explains, 'usually picked the life of 'non-royal figure, drawing on John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, popular collection of lives of those who died as martyrs' (internet source). In 1603, after the death of Elizabeth I, Thomas Heywood produced a two part play about her life called *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*. The play offended none, as the Tudor dynasty was replaced by the Stuarts and actually, as Hoenselaars claims, the play 'remained highly popular on the London stage until the closing of the theatres in 1642' (2002:29). Other of many Foxean plays was written by Thomas Drue in 1624, just one year before James I's death: however, contrary to the Heywood's plays, this one criticized the monarch himself, although it is not clear if it had offended him. *Dutchess of Suffolk* narrated the life of the Katherine of Suffolk who was forced to leave England and was allowed to return from exile only after accession of Elizabeth I to the throne. Hoenselaars explains that in this case

Tudor history really served as a veiled criticism of King James's prevaricating attitude toward his own daughter, Elizabeth Stuart, who, together with her husband, the Count Palatine, was left to her own devices amidst the political turmoil that engulfed Germany and Bohemia. (2002:30)

However, not all the playwrights approved of this rather assaultive genre, and wrote, among other things, the historical plays. Hoenselaars claims that 'with these varying biographical forms Shakespeare seems to have had little sympathy. He only had a hand in *Sir Thomas More*, but a corrective one' (2002:30).

Beside the difficulty with not offending the monarchs, the problem of historical plays was that the chronicles from which playwrights could acquire information about English history were limited and very often unreliable. H.J.C.Grierson and Dominique Goy-Blanquet consider about five main sources of English history that could get to the hands of the

Elizabethan playwrights; Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia* (first version completed in 1513, polished version in 1534), Edward Hall's *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of York and Lancaster* (1548), Raphael Holinshed's *The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1577), Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1136), and Thomas More's unfinished biography of Richard III called *The History of King Richard III* (written between 1513-1521). Although they all were widely used as the source of history, with the present knowledge it can be certainly said that they are often based only on a pure opinion of the author, obedient to the Tudor dynasty that was ruling at the time when these chronicles were written and as Grierson suggests, in some cases 'not only mythical but fictitious' (1914:xiii). Historical truth was, in the Elizabethan period, not always a priority, but it is the fact that history itself, truthful or untruthful, started to be very important after the accession of Tudors. Henry VII, the first Tudor monarch, was, according to Goy-Blanquet, 'the first English monarch who used history on a grand national scale to legitimise his accession to power'. For his purpose, he used 'a family tree inspired by Geoffrey of Monmouth' (2002:62), the chronicles available at the time. The family tree was vital for Henry VII, as 'he needed to substantiate his rightful entitlement for the English crown' (Bejblík, 1979:65, my translation)¹¹. This was nothing exceptional though, many families have their family trees invented at the time and Henry VII has his tree deduced beginning with King Arthur.

Also the whole forthcoming period of Tudor's reign became suitable for formation of new chronicles. Henry VII, for example, deserved 'to be hailed as a father of Tudor historiography' (D. Goy-Blanquet, 2002:62), because, after using history as an evidence of his right to the English throne, he also asked Vergil to write new English chronicles. Goy-Blanquet explains that the twenty-seven volume of Vergil's chronicles, had, as they were written by the Italian historian, the advantage of being 'less concerned by the recent partisan quarrels [the Wars of Roses]' than the histories written by Vergil's 'English colleagues' (2002:62). Also, as Vergil was a great historian, these chronicles, that were finished in 1534, are 'the first to use critical judgement, compare sources, and check the veracity of facts' (2002:62). Nonetheless, the version also probably more accessible to the Elizabethan playwrights was the one written by Edward Hall. His work, published in 1548, was 'to a large extent a wordy translation of Vergil's elegant Latin, embellished with extracts from other chronicles and spiced up with his own moral commentaries (2002:63). Hall had a different opinion on English history, as he was a firm Protestant and a devotee of Henry VIII, but as claimed further,

He never quarrels with Vergil's opinions – he simply omits them when they disagree with his own. He is also much less rigorous, seldom embarrassed by the conflict of sources or philosophical systems he appeals to, and frequently suits his ethics to hard facts. (2002:63)

However, although all these sources were possible to use, the chronicles that 'inspired the vogue of the history play' (2002:63) were those written by Raphael Holinshed, re-edited in 1587. Holinshed was influenced by many different sources. The section on Scottish history was based on the Hector Boece's *Historiae Scotorum*, which was written in the Scottish dialect: however, most of those were 'only the invention of Boece and his predecessors anxious to trace the descent of their king' (Grierson, 1914:xiii). For the other sections Holinshed was 'paraphrasing or copying Hall, in other words Vergil, on the York and Lancaster reigns, with heavy cuts of their providential comments' (Goy-Blanquet, 2002:63). Not even More treated the War of Roses differently in his *The History of King Richard III*, which blackened Richard by collecting 'all the direct testimonies he could find, usually from Richard's worst enemies, without the least effort to sift truth from prejudice' (2002:62). Thus, Hattway's claim that the playwright could count on a minimal historical knowledge in the audience, and so represent it in various ways, cannot be accepted without objections. After all, the facts show that even conception of the playwrights having a slight prospect of creating something historically accurate and politically uneffected, even if they wanted to, would be a misconception. They followed mostly the historians' works, and it is doubtful whether the historians had much choice and desire to explain history in an accurate way.

1.2.3. Elizabethan playwrights

Apparently, for Elizabethans all these problems were not so problematic, since the actors, plays and playwrights proliferated and playwriting became a relatively profitable job, as seen in Bejblík:

Edward Howes in the insertion to Stow's *Annals* wrote: 'Comedians and actors used to be very poor and uncouth compared to the ones from our time. Now though they became very rich and they are great actors in all subjects, so various aristocrats took them for their servants'. (1979:143, my translation)¹²

And Bejblík continues that playwrights 'were earning seventimes to tentimes more than the average craftsman (...) or well-situated teachers with completed university education' (1979:162, my translation)¹³. Writing apparently became a great craft, however, with a great number of playhouses and playwrights, and also with the preference of some playwrights by their monarchs, naturally competition appeared. There was a group of so called 'university

wits'; and, although they certainly did not always work together, since they had acquired an education at either Oxford or Cambridge they looked down on their contemporaries who lacked such an education. Even nowadays, as suggested by L.B.Wright, the lack of university education is used by the anti-Shakespeareans to prove that this 'unlettered yokel without any schooling' could not have written the plays. For them the playwright had to be 'a noble lord or the equivalent in background who had a very good education'. Nevertheless, it is known that Shakespeare 'had a very good education, acquired in the Stratford Grammar School', and Wright ends his Shakespeare defence:

Most anti-Shakespeareans are naive and betray an obvious snobbery. The author of their favourite plays, they imply, must have had a college diploma framed and hung on his study wall like the one in their dentist's office. [...] They forget that genius has a way of cropping up in unexpected places and that none of the great writers [...] got his inspiration in a college or university course. (1960:xxxiii)

Moreover, since the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods are being considered here, neither this intellectuality nor rivalry can be perceived from our present point of view, for education, during the period, was no test of civility. The Cambridge graduate Christopher Marlowe, for example, considered by some literarywise superior to uneducated Shakespeare, was killed young in a tavern quarrel; Ben Jonson killed two actors in a duel. Further, in spite of Shakespeare not having the university education, Harold Bloom and most critics assert that Shakespeare proved to be the best playwright of the Elizabethan period, perhaps of all times:

Are there personalities (in our sense) in the plays of any Shakespeare's rivals? Marlowe deliberately kept to cartoons, even in *Barabas* [...], and Ben Jonson as deliberately confined himself to ideograms, even in *Volpone* [...]. I have a great taste for John Webster, but his heroines and villains alike vanish when juxtaposed to those of Shakespeare. (1998:5)

Yet, for Bloom Shakespeare does not win the primacy only as the best Elizabethan playwright, for him Shakespeare holds the pre-eminence in the whole history of human race. He explains that all characters before Shakespeare were basically unchanging, as they were 'represented as ageing and dying, but not as changing because their relationship to themselves, rather than to the gods or God, has changed' (1998:xvii). Bloom further claims that it was the great Shakespeare who created personalities, in our present sense, because 'in Shakespeare, characters develop rather than unfold, and they develop because they reconceive themselves' (1998:xvii), Bloom even suggesting that other characters since Shakespeare were created 'by an imitation of Shakespeare' (1998:6). The eighteenth-century titan Samuel Johnson supports this view by declaring that 'we owe Shakespeare everything'. Bloom adds that it was Shakespeare who has taught us to understand human nature. Some scholars might

oppose Bloom's theory, a theory he practically borrows from Johnson, however, if nothing else, Shakespeare has proved to be exceptional if only by remaining onstage for more than four hundred years, even at times when the enormous interest in the theatre has decreased exceedingly.

Shakespeare proved his brilliance even to his immediate contemporaries. In the autumn of 1592, Robert Greene, the best known of the professional writers, as he was dying, wrote a letter to his fellow writers in which he warned them against the ingratitude of players in general, and in particular against an 'upstart crow' who 'supposes he is as much able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and being an absolute Johannes Factotum is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country.' As confirmed by G. B. Harrison, 'this is the first reference to Shakespeare, and the whole passage suggests that he had become suddenly famous as a playwright and was recognized as the greatest of English dramatists by the summer of 1598' (1998:6). He was so popular that Francis Meres, in his *Palladis Tamia: Wits Treasury*, referred to him in flattering terms as 'mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare,' observing further that 'as Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage'. Meres concluded with the remark that 'the Muses would speak with Shakespeare's fine filed phrase if they would speak English.' Words of praise also appear in the works of dramatists who may presently be considered Shakespeare's rivals. For example, supposedly his greatest rival, Ben Jonson, wrote a poem after Shakespeare's death called *To the Memory of My Beloved Master William Shakespeare and What He Hath Left Us*, in which he portrays Shakespeare as a great artist. He writes:

To draw no envy, SHAKSPEARE, on thy name,
Am I thus ample to thy book and fame ;
While I confess thy writings to be such,
As neither Man nor Muse can praise too much.
[...]
He was not of an age, but for all time !
[...]
Sweet Swan of Avon ! what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appear,
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,
That so did take Eliza, and our James !

These words undoubtedly express the great appraisal and respect that William Shakespeare gained during his life.

Nowadays, it may be surprising that a rival writes such appreciative words about another; however, as mentioned above, authors at that time had a very different perception of

rivalry. Rivalry, for them, was not a competition, it was actually a kind of 'raillery'. Playwrights did not try to be original in the present sense, but often took each other's work and tried to rewrite it in a different way. They also often cooperated on various projects; or, if employed as actors as well, acted in each other's pieces. William Shakespeare, for example, acted in Jonson's second known play *Every Man in His Humour*, which was performed in Globe by the Lord Chamberlain's Men. So, it should not be surprising that dramatists who are now considered rivals were, in reality, friends. Jonson's poem, then, shows a good example of this 'rivalry friendship'; as a great dramatist, Ben Jonson, praises another, in this case William Shakespeare.

As the great dramatist and an actor at that time, Shakespeare was not only appreciated by his literary contemporaries, for many of his plays were performed in front of the royal court, either for Queen Elizabeth or later for James I. Despite his obvious popularity during Elizabethan and Jacobean times, there are still some who doubt that Shakespeare is the author of the plays that bear his name. Much has been written about this issue, however,

no credible evidence that would stand up in a court of law has ever been adduced to prove either that Shakespeare did not write his plays or that anyone else wrote them. (Wright, 1960:xvii)

Part of the Shakespearean authorship argument lies in the fact that many of his plots, themes and characters arise out of other writer's works; for example, Shakespeare's *Richard III* (dated probably 1593) is based on Thomas More's tragedy *The History of King Richard the Third*, written between 1513-1521; yet, the Elizabethan period also had, apart from a different perception of rivalry, a completely different measure for what was regarded as original. Novelty in a work was judged by its mastery of its theme not by its unusualness. In spite of being based on More's work, still 'with *Richard III* Shakespeare captured the imagination of the Elizabethan audience, then enormously interested in historical plays'. (Wright, 1960:xxiii)

Nonetheless, Shakespeare's exceptionality also lies elsewhere. Michael Hattway asks an unforeseen question, 'Who else [than Shakespeare] had written 'history plays'? (2002:6). The question seems to be answerable in a very easy way: with the increasing importance of history and the theatre goes enormous interest in it, one would suppose that every playwright was writing history plays to satisfy their audience. However, the answer is definitely not so simple and the question is by all means worth contemplating. Even the seemingly simple, distinction between a history play and a tragedy has always been difficult

to define, as is revealed by Hattaway: 'For generations it was common to regard the union of 'history' and 'tragedy' as an uneasy one' (2002:3). He explains that

generic classification was bound to be difficult given that most of the English histories centre their action on the reign of a monarch, the narrative ending with his death. It was therefore inevitable that 'history' plays were going to be closely affiliated with 'tragedy'. Some were initially labelled as such.'(2002:3)

Presently, for example, *Richard III* is classified as a history play; however, when the play was published as part of the First Folio (the first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays published after his death) the two editors, John Heminges and Henry Condell, released the play under the title *The Tragedy of Richard the Third: with the Landing of Earl Richmond, and the Battle at Bosworth Field* (Hattway, 2002:3), and the same actually happened in the Quarto with another presently classified, as a history play, *Richard II*. It can be doubted though that anyone in the Elizabethan period thought much about the distinction between these two genres, especially as they are very close and the distinction not really definite, even nowadays. *Macbeth* can be seen as a good example of this discrepancy. Unlike *Richard III*, and actually all the plays covering the discord of the Lancastrians and the Yorkists that are labelled as history plays, *Macbeth* is classified as a tragedy. Certainly *Macbeth* has nothing in common with the famous dispute of the two dynasties; however, this play also covers a part of the history - the Scottish history of the eleventh century - and so, quite logically, it should not really be labelled a tragedy but a history play. Hattway's question is indisputably legitimate; nonetheless, one should probably not ask 'Who else had written history plays', but who else had written about the War of the Roses. Even with the refined question, though the answer remains the same, none of the Elizabethan or Jacobean playwrights had dramatized so many 'chronicles' accounts of the War of the Roses (...) and to the persistent conflict between England and France during the Hundred Years War' (Hattaway, 2002:7) as Shakespeare himself. Richard Helgerson agrees, claiming that beyond doubt 'Shakespeare did make a larger contribution to that genre than anyone else' (1977:25). Thus, although many of Shakespeare's plays are actually based on the works of others, this fact did not apparently lessen his craft in the eyes of the Elizabethan and Jacobean viewer, and it would also be very unlikely, as many other playwrights at the time practised exactly the same. Nonetheless, not everyone was able to 'offer spectators and readers an opportunity to learn a significant part of English history' (D.M.Bergeron, 2002:41).

Moreover, Shakespeare not only captured the imagination of the average viewer - in the words of Wright, he also 'gave a [historical] interpretation pleasing to the Tudors'

(1960:xxi), and subsequently to the Stuarts. As demonstrated above, Shakespeare was not keen on biographical history plays, and even his choice of topics and time period, he did not use history succeeding the War of the Roses, was rather vigilant. In spite of Shakespeare's circumspect choice of the time period, all the material in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period was necessary to treat cautiously, as history could always be connected with monarchs' predecessors, as in the case of *Richard III*, or legendary founders of the dynasties, as in *Macbeth*. Shakespeare was certainly aware of this, as he sometimes even changed the chronicle material in order not to offend the monarch. There are some scholars Hattway who claims that 'Shakespeare may have provoked rather than please those who would control the political culture of England' (2002:15). The basic argument lies in the letter that

on 12 November 1589 the Privy Council wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Mayor of London, and Edmund Tilney, Master of Revels, asking them each to appoint someone to scrutinise all plays performed in and about the City of London because the players had taken 'upon them, without judgement or decorum, to handle matters of divinity and state'. Parts of the Henry VI plays reveal evidence of censorship by Tilney – or of self-censorship by the players. (2002:15)

Firstly, it might be true, however, *Henry VI* is one of Shakespeare's early plays; and secondly, this provocation certainly does not appear in either *Richard III* or *Macbeth*. In these two plays the situation is quite contrary: the material that was used for these two play was chosen and adjusted so as not to provoke but to please.

2. Richard III

Although being one of his earliest plays, *Richard III* brought William Shakespeare great success. This can be contributed to Shakespeare's remarkably good choice of the topic and in the exceptionally good timing. *Richard III* was written at the time when the Tudors had been ruling the country for over a century, which brought long-wished-for peace and stability. The Tudor period may seem relatively peaceful and stable to a twenty-first century person who cannot really judge 'the outset of order, firm reign and gradual material and

spiritual development' (Stříbrný, 1965:8, my translation)¹⁴ that came with the Tudors' reign. Certainly many parts of life had changed, one of the greatest being drama, which changed its shape completely; and, owing to Shakespeare and his contemporaries, became an inseparable part of culture in the forthcoming centuries. Among all of Shakespeare's plays written in the Tudor period, *Richard III* does not enchant many present scholars, who regard the play to be only a starting point in the development of Shakespeare's subsequent greatness. Yet, by the characterization of Richard III in the play, Shakespeare changed the character widely used until the moment when this great antagonist appeared. Although pictured as a colossal villain, Richard remains credibly human throughout the whole play; human, however, only to an extent not to offend the members of the Tudor dynasty, which, with a bit of exaggeration, is the malefactor causing both Richards, the real and literary, to be viewed as monstrous creatures.

2.2. The influence of the Tudor dynasty

This chapter mainly covers the material that was created in the Tudor period in pursuit of stabilizing Henry VII on the English throne. Henry VII certainly needed to support his claim to the crown, a claim which will be confronted with the a situation similar to which arose after the dethroning of Richard II almost a century before Henry VII killed Richard III. This chapter will also show Henry's incredible propagandistic skills, and their uses. Extra space will be given to the histories that began to be written during his reign, leading namely to Vergil's and More's work, as they have been, unlike the others, considered the most credible evidence of the period preceding the Tudor. This all is, of course, dealt with as background for Shakespeare's play.

2.1.1. *Richard III* - dating and choice of material

Richard III was written during the reign of the fifth monarch of the Tudor dynasty, Queen Elizabeth; and, by this play, the whole historical cycle, beginning with the trilogy *Henry VI*, was completed. At the time the play was put on stage, the Tudor dynasty looked anything but secure. An ageing, unmarried female monarch ruled the country, and many people certainly believed that it was only a matter of time before the absence of an heir would once again cause confusion in assension. Shakespeare hardly could have chosen a better time to write his play picturing Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who butchers his way to the throne, murdering everyone standing in his way, including his own brother, wife, and

even young nephews, and whose evil plots are staunches only by Henry VII, who, by his triumphant victory, establishes the Tudor dynasty.

The date of the play is uncertain: however, as the last part of the tetralogy, it probably followed the preceding parts quite closely. Louis B. Wright claims that the play 'dates from somewhere between the end of 1592 and the beginning of 1595; perhaps 1593 is about as close as we can come to its first performance' (1960:ix) that was probably at The Theatre, as it was being used by the Lord Chamberlain's Men (Shakespeare's company) at that time. Although various sources date *Richard III* differently, it is certain that the play existed in 1597, as Anthony Hammond in Arden's edition of *Richard III* asserts: it 'was entered on the Stationers' Register by Andrew Wise on 20 October 1597' (2002:1). Nonetheless, the exact date is not vital, as the play certainly emerged during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, and so the influence of the period and the Tudor dynasty, that can be uncovered in the play, would not change within a few years and neither would its popularity, which was partly caused by Shakespeare's choice of a recent history topic - though not recent enough to violate the ban on portraying living monarchs. Hazarding 'chancy' material including Elizabeth and her contemporaries was unnecessary, as the Wars of Roses - and especially murderous career of Richard III - provided an inexhaustible supply of material that would probably always please the Tudor rulers, since Henry VII, had 'rescued' England from the evil Plantagenet at Bosworth Field in 1485.

2.1.2. Accusation and defence of Richard III

Richard. O monstrous fault, to harbor such a thought! (III.ii. 164)

This exclamation excellently formulates the misconception about Richard III's nature, at least as some have seen it. Like Richard in the third part of Henry VI, some scholars seem to scream, 'What a nonsense! Richard and evil?' - however, it seems that nothing can help blackened Richard III to regain an unbesmirched reputation, because, as Josephine Tey claims, 'you cannot fight Shakespeare and win' (internet source). However, is only Shakespeare to blame for the monstrous picture of Richard III? Shakespeare certainly wrote a play vilifying Richard III: however, his play only stands at the top of the 'pyramid' that began at the accession of Henry VII, who had many motives for blackening his predecessor. Though, voices defending Richard could have been heard, although not in vast number, as early as soon as the beginning of the seventeenth century. As Anthony Hammond

clarifies: 'the first author to express hostility towards Shakespeare's interpretation of the last Plantagenet was Sir William Cornwallis' (2002:67) in his *Essays of Certain Paradoxes* in 1617, which initiated a long running argument between defenders of Richard III (for whom the arch-villain is, of course, King Henry VII) and their opponents. Luis B. Wright, one of the current scholars defending Richard's reputation, claims that 'Henry Tudor had reason to want to blacken Richard's name and damage the claims of all rivals to the throne: his claim was none too strong' (1960:xxvi). Seemingly, 'Henry VII had no stronger claim to the throne than Bolingbroke' (Tony Tanner, 1994:xvii) almost a hundred years before.

In 1399, when Richard II was dethroned, problems with succession had arisen, as it was 'the first time after the death of Richard the Lionheart that the English king stopped reigning without having a son and heir' (Ralph A. Griffiths, 1999:177, my translation)¹⁵. Established custom rightful since 1216 warranted that the succession preference of the oldest male, although it might have meant a child-male-king, as in case of Richard II himself. However, there was no common rule established if this one failed. In 1399, the choice was laid between two blood-line descendants, and thirty-three-year-old Bolingbroke became the one who gained - or more precisely, seized - the crown then. An almost identical situation arose after the death of Richard III, who died childless, as his only legitimate son and heir (Richard III also had two illegitimate children) died before the Battle of Bosworth. Henry VII though had according to Tony Tanner two great advantages:

He was the only one of the fifteenth century usurpers to kill his childless predecessors in battle. And most importantly, he was supported by the Yorkists who had become disillusioned with the increasingly impossible Richard. (1994:xviii)

It has to be add here, that not all the Yorkists supported the new king; a great part of the north part of the country, for example, was dissatisfied with the new monarch and the way he seized the English crown. Nevertheless, even with the apparent advantages Henry had, contrary to his forerunners, and with the fact that he was so ingenious 'to declare himself the king with the effect from the day preceding the day of the battle' (John Guy, 1999:211, my translation)¹⁶. Still, his claim remained feeble. Luis B. Wright describes the situation:

He was the son of Edmund Tudor and Margaret Beaufort, both of whom were of royal blood. [...] Henry was the grandson of Owen Tudor, a Welsh adventurer who sang his way into the favor of [...] the widow of Henry V. Katherine bore him three sons, of whom Henry's father was the second, but unfortunately they were all born without benefit of clergy. On his mother's side, Henry Tudor was the great-great grandson of John of Gaunt, brother of Edward III, and Katherine Swynford, his entrancing mistress. Though Richard II long ago had made all this legitimate by royal decree and had given the family the name Beaufort, Henry Tudor nevertheless felt uneasy in his pretensions. (1960:xxvi)

To 'legitimize' his claim and secure the position for his own heirs, Henry VII, descendant of Lancasters, married the daughter of King Edward IV, Elizabeth of York, and by this act 'linked the two royal families, white and red rose, whose dispute had been destroying the country for previous thirty years' (Bejblík, 1979:66, my translation)¹⁷. Not only did Henry, by this marriage, connect the two families, but he also 'gave the opportunity to the Yorkists, who joined him in the fight against Richard, to justify their renegadion' (John Guy, 1999:211, my translation)¹⁸. Identically, in the last speech of *Richard III* Richmond declares:

Proclaim a pardon to the soldiers fled
That in submission will return to us;
And then, as we have ta'en the sacrament,
We will unite the white rose and the red. (V.v. 16-19)

Besides, Kovařík asserts that 'Henry VII was an ambitious and rational monarch' (2003:401, my translation)¹⁹: so, although he made all those precautions, and even though, after his marriage to Elizabeth, a successor was born, none of those steps seemed to prevent all the possible assaults from prospective candidates to the English throne. Henry wanted to support his title to the throne by some written contribution, as he probably did not share the view of Shakespeare's Prince Edward:

But say, my lord, it were not register'd,
Methinks the truth should live from age to age,
As 'twere retail'd to all posterity,
Even to the general all-ending day. (III.iii. 75-78)

2.1.3. The written evidence

Actually, Henry VII might have agreed that the truth might only be transmitted orally, and he surely spread various truths, half-truths, and lies from which he benefitted. However, it certainly holds true that, once written, information gains a totally different dimension. Henry VII definitely did not undermine the power of the written form and 'employed' historians to 'upgrade' the period of Richard III's reign. Domimique Goy-Blanquet emphasizes that 'it is now well known that representations of the last Plantagenet were deliberately distorted by propaganda. It was not enough for a conquering Richmond to inherit the Lancaster claim' (2002:61). His historians were required to do two things: to vilify Richard and to sustain Henry's claim by a family tree tracing his origins back to the legendary king of the Brits, King Arthur, who was regarded, according to Alois Bejblík, as 'the archetype of knighthood and one of nine titans [...], who came to the world as the

incarnation of Christ' (1979:66, my translation)²⁰. Some authors even claim that the family tree was traced back as far as the Celtic kings, and beyond them to the first Trojan settlers. The great family tree was invented; however, the greatest invention of Henry VII, and consequently also Henry VIII, was the creation of a monster figure, Richard III.

Nowadays, a majority of authors writing history plays would consult many primary and secondary sources, and do detailed research. However, the approach in the sixteenth century was very different. The aim of sixteenth-century authors' was not to account history events and personalities accurately: 'the real significance', as Martin Hilský claims, 'lay in giving a model of how to live, and in the kings' case how to rule the country' (2004:135, my translation)²¹. In Richard's case, the aim was clear: a monstrous, misshapen king would never lead his country into stability and peace: and, quite logically, this would show the importance of the new monarch and provide Henry with some extra possibilities for stabilizing his own position on the throne, at least in the eyes of English citizens, which was very important. Correspondingly, Richard III's monstrosity was so shrewdly invented and so greatly 'nourished' that the evil picture has persisted among the public for centuries, even though historians and scholars have fought to vindicate Richard's reputation. Their defending voices though remain feeble compared to the voices of the 'blackeners' whose history glorifying the Tudors created the generally accepted view of the fifteenth and sixteenth century. The greatest merit of this situation is attributed to Shakespeare; but, it should be remembered that, in his *Richard III*, he simply used the available sources (see chapter 1.3.2), which, as suggested in the introductory part, cannot be considered reliable sources of history. John Julius Norwich insinuates that Polydore Vergil, who was invited to write new English histories in 1501, and who arrived in England only in 1502, 'tells us that he personally interviewed "every elderly man pointed out to [him] as having once held an important position in public life" (1999:357). Assuredly, he could have heard stories of a cruel, pitiless monarch, as his 'villainous portrait [...] had been developing since Richard's own time'; nonetheless, it can only be speculated where the truth ended and gradually gained 'characteristics that critics would later associate with the Tudor Myth' (Janis Lull, 1999:6), since Vergil began writing his histories only about twenty years after Richard's defeat. The same applies for Thomas More, who witnessed the reign of Richard III himself (which has always been the main reason why his work has been given such wide acceptance), and who demolished Richard in his *The History of King Richard III*, the history that inspired Shakespeare's play. However, there are some factors that probably influenced More's blackening work. It has to be remembered that he 'grew up in the household of Cardinal

John Morton, one of the councillors of Henry VII and a sworn enemy of Richard III' (Sharon D. Michalove, 1995); furthermore, More was only seven years old at the time of the battle of Bosworth field. Hence, his period evidence was also based on interviews with Richard's contemporaries, not on his own experience. It can be believed though that 'he certainly knew many [of Richard's contemporaries]'. Moreover, as J.J.Norwich continues, his 'own father, a leading London lawyer, would have been able to give him first-hand evidence in plenty of what had really occurred in that short and disastrous reign' (1999:357). Clearly, More's evidence came from the second hand just as Vergil's. Besides, these histories were written during the Tudor period, so no one wanted to fall into disgrace; and, most importantly, since the priority was not real history, but a kind of a lesson, the memories of the fearful years of the War of Roses, and the hope that Henry VII had brought meant that no one, probably had difficulties to write or believe these assaults on the preceding period - and so, on the last ruling monarch, Richard III.

Basically it would be possible to continue in the same way with all the sources used by Shakespeare to write *Richard III*; and generally, Tudors history is nowadays viewed as based mainly on various legends, myths and rumours that were at least partly influenced by the initiation of historiography during the Tudor period and also due to their political propaganda, not necessarily caused by the hatred to the last Plantagenet (maybe by the hatred of the interwied witnesses), but by the necessity of the situation in which Henry VII appeared. And, as explained, who would be easier to vilify than the last monarch of a long war-period ruining the country? Nevertheless, viewed in a historical context, Richard III seems to be quite the opposite of the theatre character, which again questions the truthfulness of the witnesses, and consequently the chronicles, however this topic should be dealt with in detail later.

2.2. Elizabethan influence in the play

As Elizabethan staging has specific qualities, the first chapter once again mentions the design and staging that were used in the period; however, the main purpose is to show how Shakespeare was influenced by the original theatre forms – specifically in staging, use of properties, and choice of characters. The second part is devoted to Queen Elizabeth, as *Richard III* was written and performed during her reign. Attention is aimed at her role of the female-illegitimate but still brilliant Tudor monarch, who was able to enhance her country and enable the boom in various aspects, specifically cultural, of the English people.

2.2.1. Staging and Elizabethan theatre groups

All Shakespeare's early plays were designed to be performed in inns, courtyards, and mostly in public playhouses that could hold large audience. As stated heretofore, the openair playhouses were not adapted for splendid stage design and 'only the sorts of properties the actors themselves could carry on and off the stage' (Lull, 1999:102) were used. The advantage, of course, was that the lack of staging enabled Shakespeare to shift the play from one location to another very flexibly, so to get from the king's palace to the Tower or the battle field in just two scenes caused no problems. However, it was necessary then to allude to the change in the dialogue. In the third scene of *Richard III*, for example, Buckingham welcomes Prince Edward by the words: 'Welcome, sweet Prince, to London, to your chamber.' (III.i.1) to evoke the place of their meeting, and so evidently the properties and staging were not really necessary. Besides, Lull suggests that Elizabethan audience was used to 'the generalised settings and fast-paced dialogue', and so all this 'was very well received' (2002:103/4). This is not surprising since, only a century before no playhouses existed at all, and people were used to performances not only in inns and courtyards but even, for example, on waggons. Hence, they certainly did not expect great stage setting. In addition to that, Elizabethan authors and viewers alike regarded theatre as similar to real life: for them, the action proceeding on the stage did not represent only the pure illusion bolstered by the staging, properties, and costumes, for the Elizabethans the stage imitated real life, as Bejblík asserts:

In life, literature and the whole drama of the Shakespeare period alike, the conception of similarity between theatre and life was firmly established; this conception became a part of period language and thinking. Theatre as microcosmos in macrocosmos appeared as something logical and natural. (1979:125, my translation)²²

Logically, in real life the placement and clothes are usually not as important as the action itself, and this simply held true in the case of the Elizabethan theatre.

As with the staging, the theatrical forms in the Elizabethan period continued in the tradition created by the companies of strolling players that were discussed earlier. The main structure of the most folk plays formed singing, dance, and, as Bejblík asserts, also something 'that was even at the Shakespeare period called 'mumming', which was performing in masks' (1979:129, my translation)²³. These plays were the first experience that people often had with theatre; but, as Bejblík continues, 'the real school of the theatre art became the religious, biblical plays' (1979:130, my translation)²⁴. Those plays usually took a

few days and some of them had as many as 'three hundred actors in five hundred roles' (1979:131, my translation)²⁵. The theatre companies then, if one can actually use the word 'company', had only a few actors in the stable cast of each group, the other parts were usually acted by various servants from the region, or one actor acted in more roles in one play. In 1473 Sir John Paston wrote a letter saying that 'he sustained a servant because he had proved worth in roles of saint George, Robin Hood, and also sheriff of Nottingham' (1979:132, my translation)²⁶, and makes apparent how extremely disappointed he was when this servant left his residence.

Shakespeare was certainly influenced by traditional forms, so it should not be surprising that *Richard III* is one of the longest of Shakespeare's plays, with almost 3,600 dialogue lines and a vast number of actors needed. As confirmed by Hammond, the play 'must inevitably have been difficult to cast. (...) There are altogether fifty-two speaking parts, three more named but mute parts, and an indefinite number of supernumeraries required' (2002:62). However, as he further suggests, there is a likely possibility that the roles would be doubled, as even the largest Elizabethan company would have had problems to cast all the roles:

We can probably assume that the players of Richard and Buckingham would not have doubled: their parts are too long, and they are too much in the audience's eye to do so convincingly. (2002:63)

Hammond argues further that, 'while [the play] is expensive in terms of manpower, it is otherwise suitable for a touring production, [as] the only necessary properties seem to be a pair of tents' (2002:65). Shakespeare certainly distinguished between things that were possible and impossible to realize, and his *Richard III*, as one of his earliest plays; clearly follows the influence of the preceding theatrical forms, and probably also the influence of his monarch is probably also traceable in it.

2.2.2. Queen Elizabeth

Margaret: I had rather be a country servant maid,
Than a great queen, with this condition,
To be so baited, scorn'd, and stormed at:
Small joy have I in being England's queen. (I.iii. 107-110)

It is not clear if Queen Elizabeth would have complained in the same way as Queen Margaret in *Richard III*; however, she definitely did not have an easy life, and so Shakespeare might have included this line into the play intentionally for her ears.

When the Queen ascended to the throne in 1558, she quickly realized that she had inherited a poor country quite devastated by the religious instability of the previous years. The Queen's own status appeared equally disheartening. Much of Europe regarded her as the illegitimate child of King Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn, since the Pope had not sanctioned Henry's divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. As a "bastard", Elizabeth had no right to ascend the English throne. The same situation had actually arisen after the death of Richard III, as his two illegitimate children remained alive. However, Henry VII, aware of the situation, married off Richard's daughter and imprisoned his son. Although the son, or someone who claimed to be Richard's son, appeared and was subsequently crowned in Ireland, Henry continued to secure his and his heirs' positions. 'Elizabeth, of course, was confident that it was she who ruled', and she claimed that 'God, he only, had [...] made her Queen' (Oxford Dictionary). Nonetheless, Elizabeth 'illegitimacy' proved not to be the only problem. A more serious problem was posed by her gender.

A woman's role in the sixteenth century was quite distinct: they got married, and their main responsibility was 'to manage households, but they were excluded from the public offices' (Oxford Dictionary). They, moreover, had no right to inherit after their fathers – this, logically, did not hold true in the case of the crown, yet women were not usually considered full-bodied rulers: 'The Scottish reformer John Knox asserted that the 'imbecility' of their sex rendered women unfit to bear rule' (Oxford Dictionary). Thus,

it was not only Knox who believed a female ruler to be, if not an unnatural monstrosity, an unusual and in principle undesirable exception to the regular rule governing human affairs. Apart from any other considerations, it was not clear that a woman could exercise the oldest function of a monarch, leading her forces into battle. Nor could she, in any station or walk of life, ordinarily exercise the kind of authority associated with the mental powers of a man. (Oxford Dictionary)

Evidently, Elizabeth was not respected automatically; she had to secure her position, not only as a Tudor, but also as a woman who did not accord with the stereotype of women as "brainless". Maurois asserts that

William Cecil displayed great distrust towards Elizabeth after her accession to the throne, as he had only a little respect for a woman's authority. He dared to rebuke an emissary, who turned to her. (1993:206, my translation)²⁷

On another occasion, Cecil was upset 'when a messenger discussed with the queen ambassadorial dispatch, it being too much for a woman's knowledge' (Oxford Dictionary). However, Elizabeth was quite aware of her position, as she was 'a man and a woman alike' (Maurois, 1993:207, my translation)²⁸. Since she had also inherited great intellect, she herself confessed, 'I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman', yet in the same breath added, 'but I have the heart and stomach of a king' (Tilbury speech, 1588). Inheriting not only intellect, but also the great Tudor skill at propaganda and politics, she gradually stabilised her position, even though the situation became more complicated, especially since she had decided not to get married.

'Decided' might be perceived as too strong a word; however, Brenda Ralph Lewis claims that 'when she [Elizabeth] and Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, were both about nine years old, she had told him she would never take a husband' (2003:3), which could have been seen as a childish caprice; however, it became reality, and some present authors argue about the reason for the decision. Of course, it might have been the result of her father's attitude and behaviour to his wives (she clearly had to view marriage as a certain danger, as her mother was executed after being accused of adultery and incest). The others clarify that she did not want to fall under the power of her future husband, as he would have been given the power, and she would have to be subservient to his will and leadership. As B. R. Lewis confirms:

After she became Queen, the dangers of marriage took on another aspect. A husband would not have occupied a secondary position, like Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband, or Prince Philip, who married the second Elizabeth in 1947. At the time of Elizabeth I, the husband of a reigning Queen could claim the Crown Matrimonial and rule as King during her lifetime. In the case of a foreign husband, this meant the one thing Elizabeth's subjects most hated: foreign influence in English affairs. If, on the other hand, she opted to marry an English noble, she would make him an "overmighty subject" with more power than any subject ought to possess. (2003:3)

Naturally, Elizabeth understood that her decision would influence the whole country - however, so did the parliament, who primarily wanted her to bear a future monarch, and so occasionally intervened by asking Elizabeth to get married. Nevertheless, Elizabeth's decision was unchangeable; and, on one occasion, she answered: 'I have already joined myself in marriage to a husband, namely the kingdom of England'. This remained her answer throughout her reign, so it became clear that once she died, the country would once be without a direct heir, either male or female. However, as Elizabeth knew how much bad blood was drawn by the absence of the heir in the past, she named her successor, although at the very last moment.

Whatever her successes, a woman in the lead was, for many, still unacceptable. Even Richard in Shakespeare's play gives a sigh and says:

Why, this it is, when men are rul'd by women:
[...]
We are not safe, Clarence, we are not safe! (I.i. 62-70)

Nevertheless, Elizabeth knew though how to use her womanhood as a tool, as B.R.Lewis asserts:

Elizabeth took blatant advantage of the fact that her enemies expected a woman to be indecisive [...], on the outside was a monarch who offered hope and then backtracked, gave half a promise and then denied it. (2003:2)

Although the monarch was a woman, the Tudors' blood still circulated in her veins, and she counted on public opinion to assist her; she needed favourable press and the right image of as monarch, as Tarnya Cooper explains: 'Her public profile had to attest to her unique status as a woman apart from her sex', because, as an unmarried woman and a monarch, she had 'more to prove and more to lose in being portrayed than most European rulers' (2003, internet source). To support her primordially fragile position, Elizabeth started creating her own publicity: 'she herself was the chief author of this persona' (B.R.Lewis, 2003:2). She 'distributed' herself basically everywhere during the so-called "re-coinage" that proceeded between 1558-1561.

The Queen's profile on the newly minted coins showed a crowned young woman with her hair loosely flowing to stress her status as a maiden, and [...] this was accompanied by the Tudor rose to emphasize continuity and her right to rule. (Cooper, 2003, internet source)

She herself later invented the image of the divine Queen, an image that persisted without much effort on her part. Simply, her propaganda worked perfectly:

Poets, playwrights, painters, [...] propagandists, pamphleteers, and ballad-makers all conspired to intensify the image of Elizabeth as "Gloriana," the Virgin Queen or the "Faerie Queene". Artists promoted Elizabeth in all her bejewelled glamour, surrounded by a glittering court full of lusty young men whose dauntless deeds she inspired. (B.R.Lewis, 2003:2)

The Queen, though, was not glorified only in writing or painting, but also various festivities were arranged to appeal to 'Good Queen Bess'. Bejblík writes that 'Elizabeth was, in the literature of Shakespeare's time, connected with the empress of all life on the earth and in the ocean' and her maidhood was compared to 'the maidhood of Luna and made her empress of sublunar sphere, and that was a considerable honour' (1979:67, my translation)²⁹. This tribute was paid to Elizabeth mostly during feasts that were organized by the nobility during

Elizabeth's visits at their residences. Bejbič describes one of these festivities prepared at Elvetham by the earl of Hertford. The Queen was welcomed by fusillade and poetry recitation, the main part of the festivity proceeded in a pond that was purposely dug in the shape of the half moon – a symbol of the virginity and power of the empress. From this pond, representing the sea, the gods, Neptune and Oceanus, arose and respectfully bowed before Elizabeth, their empress. Eventually Envy, disgusted by all the respect expressed to the Queen, appeared and obstructed the way separating the throne and the rest of the land; however, courtiers and citizens removed the barrier, and other gods came to bow to Elizabeth. Undoubtedly, this all expressed the great respect that was paid to Elizabeth. She became truly popular (1979:67-68).

This is not surprising since, even as 'only' a woman, Elizabeth was able to stabilize the country: 'Elizabeth's reign was during one of the more constructive periods in English history' (B.R.Lewis, 2003:4). Her 'country grew richer' (Maurois, 1993:224, my translation)³⁰, literature bloomed, fashion and education came to the fore: all of this because of Elizabeth's interest in knowledge, courtly behaviour and extravagant dress. She also managed to keep England's enemies away from the country. This is surprising since her enemies 'enjoyed far greater wealth, influence, and military might', such that 'England had little chance of resisting' (B.R.Lewis, 2003:2) in case of an attack. The explanation for 'how she was able to do this', has already been answered; however, it should also be remembered that, except for being a great politician and propagandist, her greatest advantage probably lay in the fact that most people underrated her as a woman, so she always astonished her advisers and visitors alike, by her abilities – she certainly had intelligence.

A French Ambassador, surprised by her linguistic skills, once praised her for her great faculty of speech; but, the Queen, used to situations like this, placidly replied: 'There is no marvel in a woman learning to speak, but there would be in teaching her to hold her tongue'. Quite a long sentence for someone who was considered to be totally "brainless". Without a doubt, Elizabeth was forced to fight for her position. Without a doubt, she succeeded – at least in the eyes of her people.

2.3. The play

This chapter will try to explore the Tudor (and generally Elizabethan) influence on the play, as well as the Tudor's possible presence in the play and the fashioning employed because of it.

Richard III is one of the Shakespeare's earliest plays, and scholars often argue that the play was written to flatter the Tudors. The question though is: who should have been flattered by this play? At the time Shakespeare wrote his play, the country was ruled by the last Tudor (as explained in the previous chapters), and a Tudor ascending the throne after this Queen was not hoped for; hence it could only have been Elizabeth who was flattered by the monstrosity of Richard III. Nonetheless, Richard had been blackened long before Shakespeare even thought about moving to London and writing for the court: Richard's "legend" was created directly after the Tudors usurped the throne. As explained before, Henry VII procured the villainous myth, and Shakespeare only tinged Richard's reputation with a dramatic flourish. So, how would Shakespeare have complimented the Queen by material that came into existence almost a hundred years before, material that she knew very well?

One of the possibilities involves Shakespeare's use of the notoriously known material at an exceptionally good time. Although the country was more or less stabilized, the danger of future disorder remained, especially since the royal succession was not solved. Notice that the same problem actually arose in the play, since, although the country was saved by a great Tudor, the villainous Richard died without a heir. The play ended with an expression of great hope: 'the lesson taught' then was that, although the situation may appear dramatic, it still may end well. The play probably served as a kind of reassurance. Nevertheless, this certainly should not serve as the only explanation, as there is much more to the play.

Shakespeare probably chose this topic for its being genuinely safe: knowing the Queen and the plays she has enjoyed, he simply wrote a play that would be heartwarming for the audience, especially the Queen, though not really aiming to flatter as, for example, he does in *Macbeth*. Such flattery was not necessary in Elizabeth's case. *Macbeth* contrasts to *Richard III* in surely being written to flatter; however, the situation arising from the accession of James I was incomparable with the situation within the Elizabethan period. As the King of the Scots and son of the executed Mary, James needed flattery to stabilise his identity as English monarch: Elizabeth did not. Since Shakespeare did not need to flatter his Queen, pleasing seems a more acceptable explanation. For this purpose, he used the traditional form of the play, with all its symbolism, as well as newly accommodated, at that time very popular, Italian influence. But Shakespeare was never the type only to repeat and rewrite dully: in spite of following the tradition, he, of course, created something that would become influential and fascinating for generations to come, a play which will now be examined in terms of its Elizabethan background.

2.3.1 The real Richard and his theatre counterpart

The Tudors created a distorted myth about Henry VII predecessor, at least as it to present historians: it actually seems that Richard was never "the evil one"; and Richard's monstrosity was denied even, as mentioned above, as early the seventeenth century, by William Cornwallis in his *The Praise of King Richard the Third*. Cornwallis purges Richard of this distortion, citing the words of an anonymous author:

Never was he noted all the life of King Edward to thirst after the kingdom; never denied he any commandment of his prince, but performed all his employments discreetly, valiantly, successfully. [...] Then how do our chroniclers report for truth, were not their malice greater than either truth or their judgement? But they are historians, and must be believed.

While historians should be believed, to a lesser or greater extent, this is not true with the history-mythologizers of the sixteenth century. It should be emphasized that Richard developed in one of the most chaotic periods of English history, and chaos often distorts historical truths or can give excuse to such distortions.

Richard's brother, apparently handsome and talented, ascended the throne in 1461. However, he is said to have two fateful weaknesses: laziness and the love of luxury, two "vices" that one can easily cultivate if one is a King. Moreover, instead of marrying someone of royal birth, as was expected, he brought to his court Elizabeth Woodville, the widow of one of his enemies, and along with her the Woodville family, a family that hungered for power. In this case, Richard, surprisingly just as his real-life counterpart, had no love for these 'upstarts', as is clearly seen from a speech from a dialogue involving Richard, the King's wife and her relatives:

Richard. I cannot tell; the world is grown so bad
That wrens make prey where eagles dare not perch.
Since every Jack became a gentleman
There's many a gentle person made a jack. (I.iii. 70-73)

The Woodvilles certainly wanted to get as much power as possible; however, in the legend, Richard was said to hunger for power and to hate his brother heartily. However, there is no evidence that Richard violently longed for the crown or hated his brother, but quite the contrary, as Louis B. Wright claims:

He [*Richard*] showed his love and loyalty throughout his life. He wanted him [*Edward*] to be a great king. And his disappointment was intense when Edward let pleasures and idleness come between himself and duty. (1960:xix)

The reason Edward neglected his Kingly duties involved his mistress Jane Shore, who is again mentioned, in a play, by Edward's brother Richard, who comments:

We say that Shore's wife hath a pretty foot,
A cherry lip, a bonny eye, a passing pleasing tongue.
[...]
Naught with Mistress Shore? I tell thee, fellow,
He that doth naught with her (excepting one)
Were best to do it secretly, alone. (I.i. 93-100)

This is a complex sexual pun which, especially when acted for the popular stage and not the Royal court, would have used hand-gestures to make the point. Edward 'doth naught with her' - 'doth naught[iness]' (Elizabethan slang for vagina). The last comment would have been even funnier, Richard suggesting that the Kingdom would be better off if his brother just masturbated in his room instead: 'He [...] were best to do it secretly, alone'. Richard's playfulness is irreverent; but, as political advice in Edward's case, sound advice a virgin queen might well have seconded. Regardless of Richard's disappointment at his brother's 'failure', he seems to have remained loyal, as well as proved himself to be 'one of the ablest generals the Yorkists had produced' (Wright, 1960:xxi). He led Edward's armies and, as mentioned in the play, fought with Prince Edward, son of Henry VI. However, there is no evidence that Richard slew him, as the play suggests. Besides, it also seems that Richard did not kill his brother George, Duke of Clarence. It is said that George was legally executed for treason, as Wright confirms: 'He had betrayed the King on more than one occasion and was utterly irresponsible and unstable' (1960:xxii). It is also doubted that Richard had his nephews killed, or that he killed his wife. The whole wooing scene is a pure creation: he really married Anne; however, the reality was much more ordinary than the dramatized version. L.B.Wright explains the situation:

Richard and Anne had known each other since they were children. Richard, it should be remembered, had spent several years in the household of Anne's father, the Earl of Warwick, at Middleham in Yorkshire. Richard apparently was genuinely in love with her and won her consent to marriage in the winter of 1472. (1960:xxi)

In its simplest reading, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, might well have been, instead of a monster, only a helpful brother who rightfully complains about his brother:

I was a pack-horse in his great affairs;
A weeder-out of his proud adversaries;
A liberal rewarder of his friends;
To royalize his blood, I spent my own. (I.iii. 122-126)

He might even have been a great uncle and a loving husband hurt by the death of his only legitimate son. It is even possible that he had never lusted for the English throne, as, he proposes, in a cynical way, in a dialogue with Lord Rivers:

Rivers. We follow'd then our lord, our sovereign king:

So should we you, if you should be our king.

Richard. If I should be? I had rather be a pedlar!

Far be it from my heart, the thought thereof.

Scholars and historians may argue about Richard's real nature; nevertheless, even if it was the truth that Richard killed all the victims ascribed to his monstrosity, it should be remembered that, at that time, 'violence was a way of life. The crown of England belonged to him who could seize it and keep a head upon his shoulders to wear it' (Wright, 1960:xvi). Whatever the truth about Richard, it is clear that he managed, as king of England, only to keep his head upon his shoulders for two short years.

3.3.5. Structure of the play

It was stated that the play is highly influenced by the theatrical forms of the Medieval Period; however, some scholars argue that the structure of the play is purely Senecan. Anthony Hammond asserts that 'the structure of the play is highly organized and formal, in a way that reveals its depth to its Senecan models' (2002:97). This argument can be supported by the play, as shown in Hammond:

Shakespeare uses a most regular 'rising action' to deal with [...] the ensuing epitasis as Richard progressively surmounts the obstacles in his path. These are chiefly the existence of his brothers and their children, and the presence of a powerful party under Queen Elizabeth. [...] The climax, however, occurs at the elimination of a relatively unimportant third party. [...] The catastasis consists of Richard's actual gaining of the throne. [...] The catastrophe is spread leisurely upon the field of Bosworth. (2002:97/8)

This certainly holds true; however, this contrasts with the claim by some scholars who present Shakespeare as an uneducated creature with no idea who Seneca was, and probably unable to use such a structure consciously anyway. Thus, as seen in the play, the structure resembles the Senecan one, and the question is how Shakespeare acquired that structure.

In contrast with what has been said by some scholars, Shakespeare received a proper education at an Elizabethan "grammar school", as Wright claims: 'many cultivated men of the day received all their formal education in the grammar school' (1960:xxxv). Although not a university graduate, '[Shakespeare] would have acquired a familiarity with Latin and [...] some Greek. He would have read Latin authors and become acquainted with the plays

of Plautus and Terence' (1960:xxxv). Nevertheless, even with this formal education and his 'curiosity that sent him in search of information' (Wright, 1960:xxxv), it is doubtful that he would have become familiar enough with Seneca to be able to write a play in this structured way. On the other hand, the 'co-operation' between playwrights of the period has been much discussed, and it is presumed that some of his contemporary 'university wits' such as Christopher Marlowe made use of this form, that Shakespeare noticed the structure at some of their plays, and that he eventually started using it as well. At the same time, Shakespeare was clearly influenced by Medieval theatrical forms, which will now be explored more explicitly.

3.3.6. Richard's physical deformity and moral vice

The Medieval influence - of course, transformed by the Elizabethan period - can be seen clearly in the character of Richard. His deformed body, which is important from the very first soliloquy, is surely not based only on the Tudor "myth":

Richard. Cheated of feature by dissembling Nature,
Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world scarce half made up-
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me, as I halt by them- (I.i. 19-23)

'Deform'd', 'unfinish'd', and 'unfashionable' - by this soliloquy, Richard starts his game of butchery which should guide him to his dreamed of target: becoming King of England. As with his violent nature, Richard's deformed body also was - from what is known today - only the creation of the Tudors. It surely suited them well, since the Elizabethans had 'a concept of harmony in Nature [that expressed] fitness and aptness to the divine plan' (Hammond, 2002:126). Based on Hammond's assertion, if the audience saw someone ugly, misshapen, someone with a disproportionate body, they would naturally believe it was an outer sign of the person's spirit; hence they would expect Richard to be a monster with devilish plans. Queen Margaret expresses these Elizabethan beliefs in her dialogue with Richard:

O, let them keep it till thy sins be ripe,
And then hurl down their indignation
On thee, the troubler of the poor world's peace.
[...]
Thou elvish-mark'd, abortive, rooting hog,
Thou that wast seal'd in thy nativity
The slave of Nature, and the son of hell; (I.iii. 219-230)

This "legend" is nowadays outdated, and it seems, as J.J.Norwich asserts, that Richard was 'a man of perfectly normal physique' (1999:356). On the other hand, Martin Hilský adds that Richard could have, 'as a consequence of a complicated delivery, one shoulder blade higher, but no period portrait [...] proves that he had a hunch and a withered arm' (2004:134, my translation)³¹. It might hold true; nonetheless, Richard's deformity features in the play and, as such, must be considered as 'an outward and visible sign of his inward spiritual gracelessness' (Hammond, 2002:105). Richard's deformity is used in two different ways: Richard uses it 'as an excuse' (2002:105) for acting or not acting in a required or desirable way. When the citizens come to ask him to ascend the throne, Richard modestly reminds them of his imperfections:

Yet so much is my poverty of spirit,
 So mighty and so many my defects,
 That I would rather hide me from my greatness –
 Being a bark to brook no mighty sea- (III.vii. 158-161)

Richard is such an innocent, but his 'peculiarity' is repeatedly criticized by his enemies. Although criticizing his appearance, they refer 'to the evil within him' (Hammond, 2002:105). Rather than to "inner ugliness", as can be seen in Queen Margret's lines above (I.iii. 219-230). Moreover, in the course of the play, 'Richard becomes the physical representation not only of a monster but of a deformed body politic' (Besnault, Bitot, 2002:110). Richard, who aims at the English crown, eventually reaches his target, and is asked to rule the country that 'wants her proper limbs'. Ironically, Buckingham pleads for the deformed Richard before the Mayor and Citizens:

The noble isle doth want her proper limbs;
 Her face defac'd with scars of infamy
 Her royal stock graft with ignoble plants. (III.vii. 124-126)

Yet, Richard does not represent a humpbacked wretch who awakens into a situation where he is asked to sit on the throne by lucky chance. Quite to the contrary, he consciously plots his way to the throne - and apparently enjoys his bloody fun during the process. His body may be 'weak', but this 'defect' is well-balanced by a sharp mind that keeps him a step ahead of his oponents, wins him the audience's sympathy, and 'attracts their attention, both by embodying its own destructive and anti-authorian impulses, and by engaging the audience in a conspiratorial relationship with him' (Hammond, 2002:100). The audience knows Richard's plans from the very first soliloquy, since he lets his ideas emerge from the depths of his mind to the surface:

Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,

By drunken prophecies, libels, and dreams,
To set my brother Clarence and the King
In deadly hate, the one against the other: (I.i.32-35)

Here Shakespeare certainly employs an aspect of dramatic heritage: 'Shakespeare rejected the obvious choice of representing [Richard] merely as a ranting tyrant' -Anthony Hammond explaining further that 'the part developed from the morality play Vice' (2002:99-100). Richard himself appraises himself as being Vice, crying on:

I say, without characters fame lives long.
Thus, like the formal Vice, Iniquity,
I moralize two meanings in one word. (III.i. 81-83)

Shakespeare grew up in a period when new theatrical forms were being applied; but still, Vice was often assigned a part, as it had its position of a main character in traditional morality plays. So, there are basically two explanations for Shakespeare's choice: firstly, he might have remembered the character, or might have included it unconsciously; or he might have expected that his audience was used to it, or apparently liked it, so he used it purposely. In either case, the choice proved excellent. Hammond asserts that 'clearly, the Vice offered opportunities for the actor on a much broader scale than did the characterization of most Tudor plays' (2002:100), and it allowed Shakespeare to create a character dominating the whole play. Tony Tanner gives evidence claiming that Richard

appears in fourteen out of twenty-five scenes, and even when he is not actually present, his shadow hangs over everything. He speaks nearly a third of lines – i.e. about one thousand out of some three thousand, six hundred. This is a completely Richard's play (1994:lvii)

- and certainly formal Vice's play. Founding his theory on the sixty-odd characteristics of the Vice, Hammond explores the similarities between Vice and Richard, and comes to the conclusion that Richard, like formal Vice, uses

asides, discussion of plans with the audience, disguise, long avoidance, but ultimate suffering of punishment, moral commentary, [...] self-explanation in soliloquy, satirical functions which include an attack on women, and various signs of depravity such as boasting and conceit, enjoyment of power, immoral sexuality. Of the Vice's familiar modes of expression we find impertinence, logic-chopping, use of oaths and proverbs, and the self-betraying slip of the tongue. (2002:101)

There are certainly a lot of similarities; yet, Richard is evidently an absolute master of disguise, as is seen, out of innumerable examples, in the scene where Richard seduces Lady Anne, whose husband was killed by Richard, and who now accompanies the funeral procession of another 'virtuous Lancaster', Henry VI, her father-in-law. Richard has

obviously killed the King as well; nevertheless, he determines to seduce her. Although, 'as a project, it sounds not only deeply distasteful, but utterly impossible' (Tanner, 1994:lxii), he really wins her over, and sends her to his palace, with, for him so typical, a hidden disguise:

Richard. That it may please you leave these sad designs
To him that hath most cause to be a mourner,
And presently repair to Crosby Place,
Where, after I have solemnly interr'd
At Chertsey Monastery this noble King,
And wet his grave with my repentant tears,
I will with all expedient duty see you. (I.ii. 214-220)

After this act of bravura, Richard, now impressed with himself, continues after Anne's exit in Vice's tradition, revealing to the audience, with evident joy, his horrible history of slaying her husband and father-in-law, and ends in praising his manliness arrogantly:

I do mistake my person all this while!
Upon my life, she finds – although I cannot –
Myself to be a marvellous proper man. (I.ii. 257-259)

This scene surely shows Shakespeare's brilliance, as this breathtaking scene is all his invention. It is undoubtedly a masterpiece: Richard is impressed with himself, the audience is impressed by both the monster, who despite his brilliance will supposedly be doomed to Hell (as will Vice), and the author of the monster.

The observations concerning the similarity with Vice are true; but, as Hammond observes, 'they do not describe the wholly irrational aspect of Richard's behaviour: the evil that the other characters react to in varying degrees of fright and horror' (2002:102). Apparently formal Vice played evil tricks on the other characters in a play, and was doomed to Hell; yet, it did not evoke the feeling of horror. Hammond finds a solution and suggests that into 'a mixture derived from medieval models is added a more modern ingredient: the Machiavel' (2002:104). This however does not mean that the two characters would simply complement each other:

Their essential qualities [actually] coincided nicely. [Machiavel] was ambitious, cruel, morally depraved to the point of seeing immorality as something virtuous, sinister, treacherous, guileful, anti-religious, criminal from choice. (Hammond, 2002:104)

To sum up, Richard is a persona created by the combination of his deformity (which predetermined him to be a monster), wit, and perspective of Vice, as well as his Machiavelian brutality, which brought onto the stage terror and accelerating horror. Well, not literally "on stage", as all the murders happen "off stage", except one, as Tanner notes: 'The only person, who actually dies on stage is Richard himself' (1994:lvii).

3.3.7. Symbols of Richard's cruelty, rise and fall

Although the evil role of Richard is recognizable from the very beginning, Shakespeare still emphasizes Richard's monstrosity by various symbols that were often used in Elizabethan literary works. Richard is frequently compared to various animals symbolizing 'savagery, demonic forces, [...] impurity and lechery' (Besnault, Bitot, 2002:111). Clarence, for instance 'dream the boar did raze his helm' (III.iv. 82). When Richmond addresses his army, he calls Richard

The wretched, bloody, and usurping boar,
That spoil'd your summer fields and fruitful vines,
Swills your warm blood like wash, and makes his trough
In your embowell'd bosoms – this foul swine. (V.ii. 7-10)

Another important symbol appearing in the play is the symbol of the sun and shadow. Norwich says that the sun has traditionally been a symbol of the king. Richard, on the other hand, is compared to a shadow throughout the play. From the very beginning Richard is 'overshadowing' the throne of England, his only pleasure is 'to spy [his] shadow in the sun' (I.i. 26), and the shadow imagery continues as he takes over the throne. Clearly, he appears in the play as an arch-villain - the shadow, thus, as the king. He should 'accept' the sun (the sun usually functioning as a symbol of kings); however, he is unable to take up this role, so his sun is only 'weary', refusing to rise on the day of the battle. Here the 'weary' sun can only symbolize the 'weary' villain-king who has just woken up to the last morning of his life.

3.3.5. Richard's downfall

Richard's downfall though starts much earlier: the battle with its 'weary monarch' is only the last stage of quite a long process. So, how and why Richard collapses is a very important question to answer. It seems, from what was said previously, that this monster, who is basically only pulling the strings of the other puppets in the play, until everything is under his control, who masters every situation with a smile, and 'is cool as could be' (1994:lxix), and who is disturbingly unpredictable as his bright mind keeps him way ahead of everyone, would never collapse. There appears to be no reason for that, as there is no single character in the play who would be able to react to his deeds in any adequate way. 'He is always icily in control, [...] elegant, mannered, even fastidious – you will never find a drop of blood on his hands' (Tony Tanner, 1994:lxix); however, the minute he seizes the crown, the mode of the play changes completely.

Well, to dampen this claim a bit, there is actually one character Richard is unable to silence. Tanner maintains that 'the voice Richard can never silence', a voice that 'haunts him throughout the play' (1994:lxiii), belongs to old Queen Margaret. Her very presence is quite fanciful, as, firstly, Margaret could have never appeared in the play, since she died in 1482 - in fact, she never returned to England after being banished years before. Secondly, she was only a woman (just as above discussed Queen Elizabeth). Interestingly, Shakespeare's women are quite often pictured as, in a way powerful and peculiar, although 'as many modern scholars assume, male spectators in Shakespeare's time would have responded with anxious hostility to representation of women's power and autonomy' (Phyllis Rackin, 2002:77). Could Queen Margaret use her power to flatter Queen Elizabeth, who was herself certainly difficult to silence? This question is not to be answered simply, as, of course, we have no access to Shakespeare's thoughts and cannot predict the Queen's reaction, if actually realized that Margaret was placed in the play for her. Hence, scholarly support for this idea is merely speculative. The only thing that can be remarked upon here is that the female characters of the period seem 'either womanly or warlike. They can be either virtuous or powerful but never both' (Rackin, 2002:79). Certainly the female characters are, even presently, quite difficult to handle on stage, which is hardly surprising if one recollects the position of women in the sixteenth century and realizes that all the female roles were, firstly, acted by boys, and secondly, were not given the same attention as the male roles.

If Margaret did not appear specifically for Queen Elizabeth, then, since she had died some years before the time in which the play is set, she could have been in some way presented as 'the voice of the past - of all the treachery and pitiless cruelty and bloody butchery of the long years of civil war' (Tanner, 1994:lxix) To silence iniquity and injustice committed in the past would be impossible; hence, words of guilt are easily traceable in the play. It is also necessary to remember that, by reaching the crown, Richard became an 'upstart' - he was not predestined to become a king, but forced his position by butchering his way there. So, in the Elizabethan perception of the world, he had to be punished for breaking 'the rules', and Queen Margaret then, accompanied by the other women in the play, became 'the voice of destiny' as a reminder of traditional Resurrection plays, or as some scholars claim, the women function as a chorus from the Medieval plays. Lull looks at the Resurrection play though and explains this in detail:

Each of the surviving Resurrection plays portrays three fundamental actions: the lamentation of the three Marys, the women's approach to the tomb - where they learn of the Resurrection from an angel or angels - and finally their testimony about what they have learned. The three female-group scenes in *Richard III* - all composed of

triads or quasi-triads of women – echo these three traditional elements of the Resurrection plays. (1999:9-10)

In the same way, in *Richard III* the three women (actually there are three, but they never seem to meet on stage) first lament for Richard's victims, then approach the tomb – the Tower in this case - where they discover that Richard has become King – and in IV.iv., they finally testify their experience, and more importantly, 'unify' to curse Richard. The curse at the end is pronounced by Richard's own mother, the Duchess of York, whose womb is to blame for his appearance, and who ends her prophesy:

My prayers on the adverse pary fight;
And there the little souls of Edward's children
Whisper the spirits of thine enemies
And promise them success and victory.
Bloody thou art; bloody will be thy end. (IV.iv. 191-195)

Still, this mere factor did not cause Richard's downfall. It began when his shadow should have turned to the sun, when he reached his long-longed for target and became king. He was perfectly secure in plotting his way to the throne; however, not predestined, he could never really make a successful king. Even if Shakespeare had thought of making Richard a good king - which would be absolutely tedious - since the play was written in the Tudor period and the aim was not to offend but, at least, to entertain, the audience would never have accepted it. As a great plotter though before reaching the throne, Richard managed to empty his world completely: he loses his wit and calmness, and starts to make fatal mistakes under the pressure of his seized position. Tony Tanner mentions the first two 'unmistakable signs that he [Richard] has hit his limit' (1994:lxvi). In a very short, but extremely important, scene, a Scrivener comes onto stage and comments about the false accusations against Lord Hastings, whom Richard has had beheaded. The Scrivener claims:

Here's a good world the while! Who is so gross
That cannot see this palpable device?
Yet who's so bold but says he sees it not?
Bad is the world, and all will come to naught
When such ill-dealing must be seen in thought. (III.vi. 10-14)

According to Tanner 'the moral outrage of anonymous servants at the cruel [...] doing of their "superiors" is very important in Shakespeare, [as] the whole world is beginning to see through Richard' (1994:lxvii). Truly, the whole world, at this point, sees Richard's true nature. In the next scene Buckingham comes and reports to Richard the citizens' reaction to the announcement that he will be the new king.

God help me: they spake not a word,

But like dumb statues or breathing stones
Star'd each on other, and look'd deadly pale. (III.vii. 24-26)

At this point Richard starts to become aware that he will never really become a legitimate king, since none can ascend the throne successfully without 'the acclaim of the people of London' (Tanner, 1994:lxvii).

Richard also begins to lose his prudence. When Buckingham, the person who helped him to the throne, demands a promised estate, Richard refuses, and moreover, asks Buckingham to kill the two princes, a request which, of course, Buckingham does not want to fulfil. Richard, Tanner asserts, 'immediately, [and] insanely, sets down Buckingham in his mind as an enemy' (1994:lxvii). Richard loses his peace, however, he is a fighter, and is unprepared to resign. If he cannot become the legitimate king himself, he is prepared to accomplish his plan by marrying Elizabeth's daughter, though the scene is nothing like the wooing of Anne. Richard asks Elizabeth for her daughter's hand, but is unusually uneasy. He does not command, but pleads.

Richard. Infer fair England's peace by this alliance.

Elizabeth. Which she shall purchase with still-lasting war.

Richard. Tell her the King, that may command, entreats. (IV.iv. 343-345)

Richard himself realizes that he has changed and lost his good spirit.

Give me a bowl of wine.
I have not that alacrity of spirit
Nor cheer of mind that I was wont to have. (V.iii. 72-74)

The last part of the play, concerning the battle, finalizes Richard's downfall, and at the same time 'gives' the final delight and great hope to the Tudors. If Queen Margaret served as 'the voice of past', then Richmond becomes the voice of future. Nevertheless, Tanner comments on this strange situation:

Although [Richmond] notionally overcomes Richard, we see no battle, and Richmond can hardly be said to 'defeat' Richard who, indeed, rises and falls all by himself. We see nothing of Richmond as a soldier or general, and, indeed, he is hardly individuated at all. He is curiously transparent figure – more like a principle of Good than a man of action. (1994:lxxi)

Tanner really observes a very interesting verity. However, thinking about Richmond being more of a principle – the voice of future - than a real person seems quite a sensible decision. In this play, Shakespeare created a monstrous, but still breathtaking character. Trying to characterize Richmond, he would never achieve even half the success of Richard; moreover, he accomplished what he wanted. He wrote a play that would be pleasing to the Tudors, based

on the Elizabethan traditions and principles; the 'upstart' was punished, the audience was taught their moral lesson, and Richmond, Henry VII, became the 'hero', even without the necessity of characterization, and Shakespeare proved a brilliant playwright. What more to add – a work of a bright mind keeping Shakespeare a step ahead of his contemporaries, well, at least in the eyes of some.

4. Macbeth

If *Richard III* was written to entertain Queen Elizabeth – and, at the same time, to pay tribute to her Tudor ancestors – *Macbeth* was certainly created to flatter the succeeding king of England, James I. This is actually seen more explicitly than in the case of the earlier play. The explicitness of the adjustments that were made in *Macbeth* should not be surprising, as the play emerged in very distinct circumstances. As stated above, when Shakespeare was writing the play for Queen Elizabeth, it was quite clear what types of plays she enjoyed and what would please her – the length of her reign assured such an understanding among the artists of her day. However, the situation that arose with the accession of James I was quite different. It became obvious that, if one wanted to retain the favour of the crown, one had to alter the style of plays, to make all necessary amendments to flatter the new monarch, and also to convince him that the play was written specifically for him, not for his predecessor. Despite the differences in audience and that audience's expectations, these two plays are quite similar in basic structure, they are also very different, especially in regard to style, which does not mean that Shakespeare would not have had his quill in all the scenes of the latter play, even if *Macbeth* certainly includes some scenes untypical for Shakespeare.

3.4. Dating of an un-Shakespearian spectacle

It is commonly believed – and Kenneth Muir supports the assumption – that the first performance of *Macbeth* took place ‘at Hampton Court on 7 August 1606 before King Christian of Denmark and James I’ (2004:xxiii); or, as J. G. McManaway argues, it was ‘the first performance of Shakespeare’s abbreviated version’ (1949:149). As with *Richard III*, there is a long-running dispute between scholars about the exact dating of the play – not only its performance, but also its ‘birth’. Kenneth Muir writes that

the play was [...] written, we may assume, between 1603 and 1606. The allusions to equivocation and to the hanging of traitors were presumably written after the trial of Father Garnet (28 March 1606) for complicity in the Gunpowder Plot. The words ‘yet could not equivocate to heaven’ imply that the speech was written after 3 May, when Garnet was hanged. (2004:xx)

This dating would be quite logical, since, in 1603, James I became King of England after the death of Elizabeth, and the necessity arose to flatter the new King with a play, and *Macbeth* was certainly intended to flatter the new monarch. Nevertheless, there are some scholars who claim that Shakespeare had already written the play during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and this version was only later adjusted for the new patron. Arthur Melville Clark suggests an even earlier dating, asserting that ‘the play was written in 1601’, his main reason for claiming this being that ‘the play contained some allusions of the Gowry conspiracy’ that took place the previous year (1982:109-13). However, Muir opposes this theory, because, for him, ‘none of these allusions is convincing’ and, moreover, as he continues, these allusions ‘could have been derived from the anonymous play, *Gowrie*, performed by Shakespeare’s company in 1604’ (2004:xviii). Still, some scholars date the origin of the play as far back as 1599, their main argument being that ‘Shakespeare would not have dared to write a play which gave approval to a rebellion against a reigning monarch after he had learned of James’s strong views on the matter’ (Kenneth Muir, 2004:xviii-xix). Shakespeare certainly knew his monarchs well, and would never have wanted to offend them, but such an early dating of the play seems to be quite vulnerable to claim, since, if Shakespeare had really written the play and later realized that its main plot was based on material which would be offensive for King James, he could have simply created a brand new play, which would probably be easier than adjusting such unsuitable material. Nevertheless, the dating, as in the case of *Richard III*, is not vital: the important thing is that *Macbeth* was well received, and that surely was Shakespeare’s aim when he started writing it.

Not only dating the play causes discrepancies between scholars: the main problem lies in the Shakespearian atypicality of some scenes. In those spurious cases where people have doubted that Shakespeare is the author of his plays, *Macbeth* is especially discussed in terms of authorship. H. J. C. Grierson asserts that ‘some parts of the play [...] are certainly un-Shakespearian. All those namely, in which Hecate appears and the witches are made to dance and sing’ (1914:xi). Grierson, however, adds that ‘with the exception of the Hecate interludes, no parts of the play can be safely detached as certainly not Shakespearian. His hands touched everything’ (1914: xiii). It might hold true that Shakespeare did not write the Hecate scene himself; nonetheless, some scholars even argue that the scene was not included in the original play at all. As the manuscript of the play did not survive, scholars and historians have drawn the play from the First Folio (originating in 1623) and also from the diaries of Shakespeare’s contemporary theatre goers, one of them being Simon Forman, who wrote about *Macbeth* in his *Book of Plays*, in which he noted all the plays he had seen. As Peter Thompson writes: ‘Had Hecate been included in the cast of the 1611 Globe performance, Forman would probably have remembered her. This scene is nothing if it is not theatrically impressive’ (1983:152). It seems very improbable though that the scene was added after Shakespeare’s death, since, by *Macbeth*, he certainly wanted to impress his new monarch, who undoubtedly enjoyed the style of such scenes.

Shakespeare has certainly been proven a master of fashioning; while writing his plays, he always bore in mind the preferences and uniqueness of his monarchs. Since King James was fond of masques, a hypothetical explanation for the Hecate scenes being written, or at least being supervised and consequently inscribed into the play, by Shakespeare himself, may be found. Although masques were not really typical for Shakespeare’s existing style, there is not a single reason why he would not incorporate this newly appreciated ‘literary style’ into his play, in an attempt to enliven the play with a masque-like scene (the Hecate scene) designed explicitly to please King James, who loved masques not only because of their colourful costumes and grand entertainment. He also realized that literature, and especially drama, could be used for ‘a shrewd sense of propaganda’ (John Butler, 2003, internet source), understanding very well that

books, masques, sermons, and plays could all be employed in his service, that they were the media which could best disseminate his views of kingship and impress upon a large number of people its power and majesty. The court masque, expensive and elaborate, baroque and ritualistic, symbolized that power and majesty, and the king’s physical place as the focal point of the entertainment reinforced it further. Thus James and Queen Anne patronized Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones, the great architect and designer of the sets for Jonson’s masques. (Butler, 2003, internet source)

King James I also gave his patronage to the company in which Shakespeare was a shareholder; therefore, Shakespeare's plays must have been enjoyable for James, enough so to patronize the company. Besides there were others to fill the role: James also employed the masters of the masque, Ben Jonson and Indigo Jones. There was no reason for James to become the royal patron of someone whose plays he would not consider spectacular – and James was surely a fastidious spectator.

3.5. James I and his influence on the play

Writing the play for James I required a great deal of tact, for he was rather a controversial ruler and very unlike Queen Elizabeth. He ascended to the throne only eight hours after the death of Queen Elizabeth; and, although she later became known as 'Good Queen Bess', it certainly was not caused by her godly reign but by her successor proving to be so bad. However, as Martin Kovář relates, 'in the spring of 1603, only a few people in England were mourning the death of Elizabeth I' (2001:9, my translation)³². This should not be surprising, since Elizabeth's unwillingness to get married – or at least to designate her successor – played a great part in the last period of her reign, and consequently led to an insecurity among all the social classes. For this reason and others, James was welcomed warmly in England; however, he later proved to be a reckless ruler, which was, for many, quite a disappointing discovery. Due to his controversial nature, he was also a difficult ruler for a playwright to write for. Such a playwright had to have much tact in writing a play for James.

3.2.1. James's succession and reign

At the time of his succession, James was not the only candidate for the English throne, as Martin Kovář asserts, 'James's right [...] was weakened by Henry VIII's will, which excluded from the succession all the progeny of Margaret Tudor, Henry VII's daughter, and James IV Stuart's wife' (2001:9, my translation)³³. Moreover, he was a foreigner, a Scot despised by many. Robert Cecil probably believed that James would make a good king, since, as Kovář continues, 'by patient manoeuvring' (2001:10, my translation)³⁴, he had already secured his position while Elizabeth was still living. This was presumably due to the fact that, during his reign as King of Scotland, James, 'a shrewd and flexible diplomat' (Thomas Babington Macaulay, the early Victorian Wig historian), had

shown 'great skill in balancing opposing and potentially dangerous political forces in Scotland' (George P. Landow, internet source). Besides, he also had two sons and a daughter, which was a great advantage after the preceding period of succession insecurity. However, as King of Britain, though he succeeded in unifying the thrones, he was a failure, 'taking little trouble to understand English ways and customs' (Landow, internet source). It is true that he inherited from Elizabeth some financial problems; but still, when arriving to England, James was bedazzled 'by the magnificence of the late Elizabethan world [...] that was incomparable' (Kovář, 2001:11, my translation)³⁵ with what he had known in Scotland. James was so impressed by his new home that he 'was later writing about his arrival to England as if writing about the entering of the Promised Land' (Kovář, 2001:11, my translation)³⁶. For him, England really became the land of hospitality, since he had at his disposal many more financial sources than in his homeland, and he is said to have spent all the money he was given. André Maurois claims that '[James's] woman-like affection for jewels costs him up to thirty-seven thousand pounds a year, while he spends only twenty-seven thousand on the army' (1993:241, my translation)³⁷.

James passed most of his time hunting. He was even rumoured to be a sadist, one who not only enjoyed hunting but really loved killing animals. Kovář describes James's peculiar habit:

When the hunt of a deer ended successfully [...] he jumped down from his horse, cut the throat of the hunted animal, put his hands into its entrails, and smeared with warm blood the faces of the courtiers who had accompanied him. (2001:17, my translation)³⁸

But, not only animals: James also enjoyed torturing people. In 1591, he personally supervised the torture of poor wretches caught up in the witchcraft trials of Scotland, with James even suggesting new forms of torture to the inquisitors (Stephen Butters, 1999, internet source). It is suggested though that his love of torture can be attributed to his tutor, George Buchanan, for whom 'beating was not just a matter of discipline but of satisfaction. At the end of his life the king still had nightmares about [Buchanan]' (Oxford Dictionary). James's childhood certainly was not an easy one; however, growing up he was 'highly educated', which he himself recognized.

3.2.2. The great scholar

James considered himself a great scholar, which could be one of the reasons why writing a play for him was such a complicated matter. He often remarked that 'they gar me

speik Latin ar I could speik Scotis' (G. F. Warner and J. P. Gilson, 1921:xxviii). Scottish though was vital for James, as he saw himself as an important part of Scottish history; as confirmed by Wright: 'Certainly Shakespeare intended to flatter King James I by his characterization of his ancestor, Banquo' (1960:xiv), who was believed, at the time *Macbeth* was written, to be the founder of the Stuart dynasty. Also, the belief in 'the divine right of kings' – the belief that, since a king's power came from God, the king had to answer to none but God – was voiced with equal vehemence by James:

While Shakespeare arguably indirectly inserted his beliefs into his fiction, King James wrote directly about his convictions in both *The Basilicon Doron* (1599) and *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598). The books of King James undoubtedly enhanced and reaffirmed Shakespeare's already developed ideas on kingship, specifically, that the usurpation or regicide of a righteously titled ruler was wrong without exception' (Amanda Mabillard, 2000, internet source).

Kenneth Muir asserts that 'James I would not have approved of an unflattering portrait of his reputed ancestor' (2004:lvi); yet, he would not have approved of the faintest breath of any supporting voice of 'rebellion even against manifest tyrants' (Kenneth Muir, 2004:lvi). As he says in *The True Law of Free Monarchies*,

The wickednesse therefore of the King can neuer make them that are ordained to be iudged by him, to become his Iudges ... Next, in place of relieuing the commonwealth out of distresse (which is their onely excuse and colour) they shall heape double distresse and desolation vpon it; and so their rebellion shall procure the contrary effects that they pretend it for. (Kenneth Muir, 2004:lvi-ii)

For him, even a 'bad king' was a 'needed king' if the country was to be ruled, and only God could judge the deeds of a king. No other living creature had the right to do so. James had strong opinions on many subjects and wrote many works, many of them considered to have been written in a very quality style. His impact on English literature is certainly considerable, not least because of his encouragement of and participation in the translation of the Bible into English. Nevertheless, this new translation of the Bible was probably realized simply because the marginal notes in the Geneva Bible had annoyed James: 'It did not conform to his strong belief in "the divine rights of kings"' (Michael H. Brown, 1988, internet source).

Although a scholar, James did not escape a belief in the supernatural; however, this belief was probably not as unequivocal as has been assumed. Supposedly, James 'met a notorious witch when he was in Aberdeen in 1589', but the witch 'seemed to hold much terror or even interest for him'. However, the situation changed 'overnight, with the spectacular discovery of a coven at North Berwick which was purportedly in league with the

devil to destroy the king, his greatest enemy on earth' (Oxford Dictionary). It is quite surprising that, even after this revelation, James remained quite sceptical about the supernatural. However, his view changed quite a bit when one of the witches, in conversation with James, retold him the dialogue between himself and his wife Anne on their wedding night in Oslo. After his conversation with the Berwich witch and his book on the subject, James turned 'into the royal demonologist' – nevertheless, 'it is a much exaggerated reputation' (Oxford Dictionary). It is even suggested that

when Shakespeare used Macbeth's witches, as recounted by the early sixteenth century scholar Hector Boece, to flatter the new king, he wrote a magnificent play; but he mistook his target. (Oxford Dictionary)

Some scholars certainly do not agree with this view. Peter Thomson, for example, argues differently, claiming that 'Shakespeare may not have dug so far into witchcraft as James I, but he does nothing in *Macbeth* to contradict the superstitious' (1983:141). It is surely hard to judge whether or not Shakespeare really intended to flatter King James by the inclusion of the witches, or if James even picked up the allusions of such in the play and enjoyed them; but, it holds true that he saw the play and neither fell asleep nor complained. So, if mistook, the target could not have been overly missed.

3.2.3. James's historical representation

James was not just a scholar expressing his opinions and belief on various topics: he sometimes contradicted what he believed in or even what he did. James, for example, preferred young boys to women, although he was married and fathered five children. Despite laws against homosexual acts at that time, it would probably be misleading to think of homosexuals in the period as oppressed, simply because they would not have seen themselves as a group, or as having rights. 'Though it was a well-kept secret, rumours of James's homosexual tendencies abounded; ironically, he wrote sternly against its practice in one of his own works, *Basilicon Doron*' (Best, 1998, internet source). André Maurois describes one of James's most notorious affairs, that with George Villiers, who made an incredibly swift career. Maurois claims that nothing more interesting to read exists than the letters between James and his lover and his son from their secret journey to Spain. The 'boys' apparently started the letters by '*Dear Dad and Gossip*' and close them by '*Your baby and dog*' (1993:244).

There is much more to be said about James; however, from what has been said, it is clear that James was an extremely unconventional and problematic monarch. His belief in all

that '*Rex est Lex*' could be extended to mean proved a very good way to reign ... but only in Scotland. In England, the Parliament was offended by this attitude, and it caused some great disputes between James and the government. He also was an exceptional scholar with an exquisite literary style; but, on the other hand, he negated his own words in areas such as 'homosexuality' by keeping male lovers of his own. Put simply, King James saw being King as being above the laws applicable to his subjects. Also, the historical evidence preserved till now appears to be quite inconsistent, since some spoke about James in flattering and some in very unflattering terms. Kovář quotes Sir Anthony Weldone, who describes James as fearful, with a tongue too big for his mouth and a sparse beard – a description which sounds very negative. However, there are also very flattering descriptions such as that by Arthur Wilson, who remembers the monarch to be 'rather tall than short, well built although a bit corpulent, but healthy' and also 'very attractive, jolly, and kind' (2001:12-13)³⁹. Writing a play for a ruler who had such contradictions and inconsistencies was certainly an extremely complex task; however, as usually, Shakespeare mastered it and pleased his new monarch.

3.6. The play

Contrary to *Richard III*, which was created simply to entertain Queen Elizabeth I, *Macbeth* was written to flatter the new monarch James I. This is evident in the fact that *Macbeth* is full of direct compliments paid to James, while there are basically no direct compliments to be found in *Richard III*. This is hardly surprising after what has been said about both monarchs. From this point of view, the plays are rather different; however, as has been said before, the basic structure of the plays is very similar, although *Macbeth* is one of Shakespeare's shortest plays, which is probably due to 'James's history of falling asleep during many previous performances' that were too long (Michael Best, internet source).

Both protagonists, Richard and Macbeth, are undoubtedly pictured as villains, although Richard presents himself as a monster from the very beginning, while Macbeth reaches the track of villainy rather gradually. It is also noteworthy that Richard speaks almost one-third of the lines in his play, and the same holds true for Macbeth. The lines in *Macbeth* were counted for the purpose of this diploma paper, which revealed that Macbeth also speaks almost one-third of the lines, almost 780 out of some 2,300 lines. It is obvious then that both characters hold the same importance in their plays, although neither of them fully directs the plot. They both also suffer from feelings of guilt (especially after killing the children of their enemies), and are subsequently unable to sleep peacefully. They both

gradually lose all the people around themselves that they care for, and their lives are ended at the point of absolute isolation. They both die alone on the battlefield – though, in the case of *Macbeth*, it might be more properly said that the battle literally came to him. In the same way, both plays end with a picture of a better future, as the villains and usurpers are dispatched, and the new ruler brings new hopes for England in the first and for Scotland in the latter play. It is really quite interesting that the two plays resemble each other in so many points, especially since they were written for two, very different monarchs. However, Shakespeare apparently knew what he was doing, as both plays were well accepted by the monarchs and audiences alike.

3.6.1. The choice of the topic

To write a play for James I which would not offend but please was a truly demanding task, as all his eccentricities and preferences had to be remembered; yet, it was also not advisable to include material in which James I had been personally involved. Shakespeare's company had earlier experienced a situation in which they unintentionally offended the new monarch with a play, when, as Peter Thompson asserts, 'they had come a cropper in 1604 with the play about the Gowry conspiracy' (1983:137). Given the Act that banned depictions of living monarchs, it seems strange that Shakespeare's company chose material closely connected with James; however, the situation was more complicated, since, as Thomson continues, 'not to perform something in which James might see his own reflection could have been viewed as a sin of omission' (1983:137). So, in writing *Macbeth*, Shakespeare chose his material carefully: picturing eleventh-century Scotland was surely a good choice. After the experiences associated with bringing the Gowry conspiracy to the stage, Shakespeare 'made assurance doubly sure by editing Holinshed' (1983:137) – one of his main sources for writing the play – to ascertain what would flatter his new patron.

One of the major changes in *Macbeth* is the role and character of Banquo, which differs considerably from the description in Holinshed's *Chronicles*. It is not difficult to find the reason, as Banquo was one of the characters that had to be treated with closest attention, as he was, in the Jacobean period, believed to be James I's distant ancestor. James was a Stuart, and it was believed that he 'was descended from a Norman named Walter Fitz Alan, who was a steward to King David I of Scotland' (Barbara Fitzsenry, 2001, internet source). The first Stuart King of Scotland, Robert II, was a descendant from the old Scottish royal family through his mother. As it was a bit embarrassing that the great King and scholar descended from a steward, a different myth arose, revealing that the Stuarts were, in fact, the

successors of Banquo, a Thane of Lochaber according to Holinshed. In both texts – Shakespeare’s play and Holinshed’s *Chronicles* – Banquo is initially a noble soldier fighting at Macbeth’s side. The Captain in the play, when speaking about Macbeth and Banquo, uses fairly flattering words:

As sparrows eagles, or the hare the lion.
If I say sooth, I must report they were
As cannons overcharg’d with double cracks. (I.ii.35-37)

Holinshed reports that Banquo later became an accomplice in the murder of King Duncan:

At length therefore, communicating his purposed intent with his trustie friends, amongst whome Banquo was the chiefest, vpon confidence of their promised aid, he slue the King. (*Chronicles*, 269)

Shakespeare, in contrast, presents Banquo as noble and blameless throughout the play, unaware of the bloody deeds of Macbeth and his wife, Lady Macbeth. As Peter Thomson says: ‘Shakespeare muffles any hint of Banquo’s collaboration in the killing of the king’ (1983:142). Such muffling was necessary, since Shakespeare and his company could hardly have benefited from portraying James’s ancestor as an accomplice in the murder of a Scottish king: thus, all blame was laid upon Macbeth. As Kenneth Muir also asserts, King Duncan is, in Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, ‘younger than in the play, and he is depicted as a feeble ruler’. By the editing of this, Muir continues, Shakespeare ‘deliberately blackened the guilt of Macbeth’ (2004:xxxvi).

Shakespeare suppressed other things as well. For example, the statement from Holinshed praising King Makbeth for ten years of good rule, during which he felt safe enough in his position to undergo a pilgrimage to Rome, to leave his well-led country for a few months without fear:

If he had attained therevnto by rightfull means, and continued in vprightnesse of iustice as he began, till the end of his reigne, he might well have bene numbered amongst the most noble princes that anie where had reigned. (*Chronicles*, 270)

In the *Chronicles* relating to King Makbeth, Holinshed also provides a section about Makbeth’s wife. Shakespeare, according to Muir, would have read that ‘[Makbeth’s] wife lay sore upon him to attempt the thing, as she was verie ambitious, burning in unquenchable desire to beare the name of a queene’ (2004:xxxix). Ambitious Lady Macbeth was not Shakespeare’s creation either: he was re-working Holinshed. However, there are some motives that Shakespeare adopted only partially, changing them to better suit his play; there are some created fully by Shakespeare, in the same way as in *Richard III*, for purely dramatic purposes.

3.3.2. 'Women' in the play

By the first scene, Shakespeare seems to establish the true nature of the play. In *Richard III*, he points out his monstrous machiavellian figure and foretells the consequent bloody deeds of the play; in *Macbeth*, he opens with the image of three witches, which, since people were confused and scared by the supernatural, probably evoked in the public the feeling of ominous evil, certainly supernatural and devilish: so, they probably expected some kind of treason or 'dirtiness' from the beginning.

The witches though were also employed because of James, who was said to be 'the royal demonologist', although a bit unrightfully. Nonetheless, there is clear evidence for Shakespeare employing the witches because of his monarch. The scene describes an act of vengeance directed against the sailor-husband of a woman who refused to give the witch some of the chestnuts she was shelling. The vengeance was completed by the husband's drowning:

I Witch. Here I have a pilot's thumb,
Wrack'd, as homeward he did come. (I.iii.28-29)

According to Thomson, Shakespeare made here 'some oblique reference to James I's adventures with the North Berwick witches during the winter 1589-90' (1983:143). He explains further that there was a storm that threatened James's ship and one of the witches, accused of having raised the storm, confessed that 'they had sailed out to sea in a sieve to drown a cat' (1983:143). James had taken part in the subsequent examination and would definitely have picked up any allusions of that in *Macbeth*. However, even without picking up these allusions, it should be remembered that the number of the weird sisters was quite an important matter. As had already been seen in *Richard III*, the number three was, for the audience, a sign that the women in *Richard III* (who are analogous to the witches in this play) have the ability to prophesy. As was shown, the prophecy was crucial in *Richard III*, and is so as well in *Macbeth*, as he drawn by the prophecy to do things that went against his initial qualities as a soldier, a subject, and a man.

The nature of the witches remains unclear. Scholars, Peter Thomson claims, have 'sought to distinguish between witches, fairies, nymphs, weird sisters, even the classical Furies and the Scandinavian Norns' (1983:140). Banquo helps to solve the problem of their looks by his description of them:

Banquo. That look not like th' inhabitants o'th' earth,
And yet are on't? Live you? Or are you aught

That man may question? You seem to understand me,
By each at once her choppy finger laying
Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,
And yet your beard forbid me to interpret
That you are so. (I.iii.40-47)

However, more problematic than their looks is whether these weird sisters actually ‘planted the seeds of evil in Macbeth’ (Muir, 2004:xxxv), or whether he had decided to kill the King long before. Kenneth Muir asserts that Macbeth had to decide about the murder himself, because ‘they have no power over the innocent’ (2004:xxxv). However, looking at the actual play, it seems that, contrary to the from-the-first-soliloquy-a-monster Richard, Macbeth really is innocent, having initially been introduced as a noble hero and a brave warrior, who is tempted to reach the crown only after his talk with the witches – or, to be more specific, after the first prophecy is fulfilled. Until then, Macbeth thinks that he does not have to do anything to become the King:

[*Aside*] If Chance will have me King, why, Chance
may crown me,
Without my stir. (I.iii.142-144)

These words certainly do not evoke a person who would have ambitions like Richard III had, to slaughter his way to the throne. Such lines continue to appear even after Macbeth’s first meeting with the witches. It is true, however, that just a scene later, the situation changes, when Macbeth asks stars to ‘hide their fires’, lest the heavens see his dark thoughts:

Macbeth. Let not light see my black and deep desires;
The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be,
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see. (I.iv.51-53)

Clearly enough, Macbeth, at this point, wishes to become the King – which stands in contrast to the claims of some scholars that the main decision is only made by Lady Macbeth, who pressures her husband into killing King Duncan.

It surely holds true that Lady Macbeth appears alone on stage in the first indoor scene of the play, as the first character emphasizing her importance in the play. However, the importance may not reside in her pushing the cowardly Macbeth into becoming a murderer. She seems to appear in the play more as Macbeth’s conscience. At the beginning of the play, when Macbeth seems uncertain of whether he really wants or can perform the murder, she, reading the letter containing this news, wishes him to come swiftly so that she can transmit some of her spirit to him:

Lady Macbeth. Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear. (I.v.25-26)

These can be just the words of an ambitious wife, just as when she soothes Macbeth, who, after committing the murder, is starting to be hunted by feelings of guilt. She though stays cool-headed and absolutely in control, advising:

These deeds must not be thought
After these ways: so, it will make us mad. (II.ii.32-33)

It can be seen that his conscience is still fighting with the decision to reach the throne in this way; however, when he gets into the situation when staying on the throne means killing many more people, including his friend Banquo, who was promised to father future Kings, Macbeth feels his guilt so strongly that his conscience starts to suffer. However, there is no way back, as 'blood will have blood' (III.iv.121). Macbeth gradually separates from his wife completely: it seems that he has enough to solve himself to have his guilty conscience with him. Lady Macbeth keeps languishing; and, at the end, when Macbeth spends his final fight trying to look brave but seems to shiver with uncertainty, Seyton comes to announce the death of Lady Macbeth. Macbeth's reaction to this is rather surprising: he does not react as a loving husband, but more like a person furious over the loss of something vital for his situation:

She should have died hereafter:
There would have been a time for such a word. (V.v.17-18)

Losing his guilty conscience seems like something positive; however, it seems to be one of the last things that a person can lose, and might evoke the tragic end of the tragic hero that is to come very soon.

4.3.3. The mirror impressions

Even if, as is argued by some scholars, Shakespeare overvalued the importance of the witches and their impact on James, he certainly included a greatly flattering scene in the play involving a mirror. This act of flattery appears in the scene which is often argued as coming directly from the quill of Shakespeare himself – however, there seems to be reasons for questioning this. The Hecate scene fits into the play perfectly; and, as Shakespeare really was a master of impressing, he would certainly want to include a masque-like scene for a monarch who loved this kind of dramatization.

After having Banquo murdered, Macbeth visits the Weird Sisters again in their cave, as he wants to make sure that his position is now no longer endangered. At first, he is

soothed; however, at the end a display of eight Kings appears, the first being Banquo, and the last with a glass in his hand. Macbeth cries:

And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass,
Which shows me many more; and some I see,
That two-fold balls and tremble sceptres carry.
Horrible sight! (IV.i.119-122)

It might have been a horrible sight for Macbeth, but it seems to have been a great compliment paid to James I, as Peter Thomson explains:

An effect that is visible only to the actors is not an effect at all. There is a fascinating possibility that, in the Hampton Court performance of 1606, the silent presenter of the eighth king held the mirror in front of James I himself, the latest guarantee of the continuing Stuart line. (1983:154)

As a proud descendant of the Stuart Dynasty, James would certainly have appreciated this scene. Shakespeare though does not end here and continues with other symbols flattering the King, symbols James would surely not miss.

4.3.4. Other symbols

With *Macbeth*, Shakespeare created one of his darkest plays; and he, of course, again employs ‘the contrast between light and darkness [that] symbolizes a general contrast between good and evil, devils and angels, hell and heaven’ (Muir, 2004:xliv). As in most of his plays, he also includes comic relief, as in the scene with the Porter, which follows the scene of the murder of King Duncan, and in which, to emphasize the bloody deeds, ‘the owl, demonic bird, hoots, from the north, the devil’s side’ (Thomson, 1983:147). The Porter appears on the stage after someone begins knocking at the castle gate, with the knocking coming from ‘the south entry, the God’s side’ (1983:147). The whole Porter’s scene is quite short; and, although it should have served as comic relief, Thomson asserts that ‘the Porter’s language invited the Jacobean audience to remember the old pageants of the harrowing of Hell, and the knocking at Hell-gate that presages heavenly judgement’ (1983:147). Many general symbolic meanings could be uncovered in the play; however, there are some more that were probably included purely because of the presence of James I in the audience.

As mention before, colours became an inseparable part of court masques, and Shakespeare again did not fail to use them. In the military scene of Act Five, he used the flags of the countries where, as Macbeth ‘has usurped Scottish colours, Malcolm may have borrowed the English’ – according to Thomson, this carried ‘a point about the uniting of the countries under James VI and I’ which James surely ‘would not miss’ (1983:156). Not only

colour carried important symbolic meaning in this Act. In the scene, where the crown is placed on Malcolm's head, Macduff greets the new King with following:

Macduff. Hail King! for so thou art. Behold, where stands
Th' usurper's cursed head: the time is free.
I see thee compass'd with thy kingdom's pearl,
That speak my salutation in their minds;
Whose voices I desire aloud with mine, –
Hail, King of Scotland!

All. Hail, King of Scotland! (V.ix.20-26)

Thomson finds this scene very important, as he supposes that 'the actor who played Macduff [...] would have known how, by graceful gesture, to include both the king on the stage and the King in the audience' (1983:159-60). Hence, this was a great scene and an even greater compliment paid to the King. Again, just as *Richard III* ends with Henry VII's rescue of England from a bloody monster, *Macbeth* ends with the rightful defeat of the usurper who wanted to prevent the Stuarts from ascending the throne, an act which was deservedly punished. Since the King's beliefs were supported by the play, both the author and the monarch must have left the theatre completely satisfied.

5. Conclusion

Richard. I shall despair. There is no creature loves me,
And if I die, no soul will pity me –
And wherefore should they, since that I myself
Find in myself no pity to myself?
Me thought the souls of all that I had murder'd
Came to my tent, and every one did threat
Tomorrow's vengeance on the head of Richard. (V.iii. 201-207)

Richard should certainly despair, since at the point of the delivery of these words, he is completely lonesome, already fully aware of his butchery deeds, and most importantly, he is scared, which is remarkable for his personality. However, he appears not to be the only one caught in such situation.

Macbeth. Though Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane,
And thou oppos'd, being of no woman born,
Yet I will try the last: before my body
I throw my warlike shield: lay on, Macduff:
And damn'd be him that first cries, 'Hold, enough!' (V.ix. 30-34)

Macbeth is trying the last; clearly, like Richard, Macbeth despairs. The prophecies, made by witches, turned against him, there is no one to sympathize with him, his wife was announced to be dead, and he, just as Richard, was haunted by his victims. Nevertheless, the pitiful end, full, and guilty conscience, is not the only part in which the two plays, *Richard III* and *Macbeth*, are similar.

One of the most striking similarities appears to be the amount of the lines that the two protagonists speak. While *Richard III* is one of Shakespeare's longest plays, and *Macbeth* his shortest one, both protagonists alike speak one third of all the lines in the plays. This though can be one of the evidence that although, between 1592 and 1603, when the two plays were written, Shakespeare moved from the Medieval to Modern concept of the character, with '*Macbeth* [Shakespeare] revisits the issue of the villain-hero that [he] first addressed in *Richard III*' (Janis Lull, 1999:16).

Richard's 'mediavelity' lies in his similarity to Vice from morality plays; he communicates with the audience, most of the time speaking about himself as about the third person, as Martin Hilský asserts: 'Richard speaks about himself, as if he got out of himself and was telling to the viewer, what he sees' (Hilský, 2004:137, my translation)⁴⁰. He unfolds all his bloody plans openly from the very beginning, he sees himself as a villain and is also 'determined to prove a villain'. This Richard's intention thrieves, as he surely proves an unmistakable villain, who believes (alike majority of Elizabethans) that being bodily misshapen, he is as well mentally misshapen, which gives him no other chance than to plot his way to the happiness, which, for him, means to become the King. As a great warrior and a villain, who has

no delight to pass away the time,
unless to spy [his] shadow in the sun (I.i. 25-26),

he controls all the situations in which he appears. His ability to control all the situations might probably be attributed to his preparation for them, since he personally plots and prepares them, as his sharp mind keeps him ahead of everyone in the play. However, the minute he achieves the role that surely was not predestined for him, when he becomes the King, Richard gradually fails to control forthcoming situations, and not being use to such a plight, in which he acts only as a puppet, not as a puppeteer, he loses the solid ground under his feet, and consequently ends lonesome, and finally defeated.

Macbeth, also a great warrior, is in essence a modern character; he does not speak to the audience but to himself, 'his soliloquies are introspective' (Martin Hilský, 2004:137, my translation)⁴¹. He is not 'determined to prove a villain' either; he seems to be a heroic captain fighting for his King, however, later is promised to become the Thane of Cawdor, and consequently the King, which turns him into the bloody deeds. His transformation is not immediate though. He, at first, hopes that 'if Chance will have [him] King, why, Chance may crown [him], without [his] stir' (I.iii.143-4), but soon after becoming the Thane of Cawdor, the promised kingdom lies heavy in his mind, and he starts pleading stars to 'hide [their] fires' not to 'see [his] black and deep desires' (I.iv. 50-1). Macbeth's ambition grows quickly, and after encouragement from his wife, he kills the King, and the loyal hero finally turns into a villain. There are some scholars though who doubt this gradual change and assert that the evil lay in Macbeth long before the prophecy. The truth is that witches have always been considered evil spirits, and if Macbeth was an unspoiled hero, he would not probably believe such prophecy originating from "the evil", and even if believed it, he certainly would not turn into evil villain so easily, and certainly would not kill. Nevertheless, if he was evil in heart

before the prophesy and the change only came to surface, or if he really was a hero and turned the villain only after the prophesy, is not as important as the act of change itself, since this gradual, in a way psychological, change recedes Macbeth from the Medieval concept, and makes Macbeth the modern character. The concept of the two characters, Richard and Macbeth, appears quite different, but still, the plays in general remain fairly similar.

Clearing their way to the crown, and consequently securing it, both, Richard and Macbeth soak themselves deep into blood, since they have to dispose of their rivals. However, reaching their target, that gradually starts disappearing, they also slay the innocent ones - they both end up having the children of their enemies killed. Having this done though, they both realize that their situation is unbearable. At this point Richard contemplates:

Uncertain way of gain! But I am in
So far in blood that sin will pluck on sin. (IV.ii. 63-64)

As Janis Lull asserts 'Macbeth, contemplating the murders of Banquo and Fleance, repeats and expands Richard's figure' (1999:16):

All causes shall give way: I am in blood
Stepp'd in so far, that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er. (III.v. 135-7)

Not only do they contemplate their situation, they can never get any rest, since their bloody deeds prevent them from the peaceful sleep. These are certainly sufficient evidence that in *Macbeth* Shakespeare 'echoes, revises, and deepens *Richard III*' (Janis Lull, 1999:16). This has been long recognized, however, the question is 'Why these plays are so similar'. Was the similarity of the plays Shakespeare's aim or a mere coincidence?

The plays were written for two very dissimilar monarchs, Queen Elizabeth I and James I in two different periods, Elizabethan and Jacobean. Dramawise though these two periods varied mostly in the concept of character, concept of staging that started to play more significant role in the Jacobean period, and also in inclusion of masques. Audience did not change much during the time when the plays for Elizabeth and James were written, neither did their thinking, basic principles of the time, or the authors; basically, the only thing that changed obviously, were the monarchs, and many changes were applied because of them. With the accession of James I on the English throne, the new generation of authors had arisen, hence, if the old ones wanted to stay on the 'sunny side' they had to adjust to the newly favoured trends. Shakespeare always knew his audience and monarchs well, and although he might have not liked the changes, he made them, and was able to flatter both, Elizabeth and James. The other reason for Shakespeare to be able to please both monarchs may lie in the

assumption that although dissimilar, both, Elizabeth and James, were equally controversial, although in different ways. Elizabeth decided not to get married, which, after the period of stability brought to England the feeling of uncertainty, James, even a bit more controversial, considered himself to be a great scholar, his personal life was quite stormy, and most importantly, he came from Scotland, which was one of the reasons for disputes between him and the parliament.

Based on this assumption, it seems logical that some parts of the plays remained more or less the same in both plays. Apart from the two main "villain" characters, also 'the recurring female-triad scenes of *Richard III* are echoed in *Macbeth* by the highly dramatic appearance of the three witches. In both plays, the women are associated with the destiny and supernatural. In *Richard III* old Queen Margaret is able to curse, and the other women later unify, to acquire the ability as well, in *Macbeth* Shakespeare uses the three witches; in Shakespeare's audience these threesomes with supernatural abilities certainly evoked the suspicion of some evil deeds, even if nothing has happened.

The women have clear influence on the development of the play, however, Richard and Macbeth surely are the characters in centre of attention, and they decide about their lives. Their decision causes though that in the end, both hero-villains remain alone, scared in a way, but still brave warriors fighting for their place in the world. Neither of the endings though stands as a pitiful end of two characters, by those ending Shakespeare mainly paid a great compliment to his monarchs. In *Richard III* Shakespeare complimented Queen Elizabeth, as the latest of the Tudor monarchs. In the dream of Richard and Richmond, the ghosts of the murdered princes predict that Richmond will survive the battle 'and beget a happy race of kings' (V.iii.158), one of them, of course, Queen herself. The greatest compliment to James I is paid a bit earlier in the play, in a mirror moment in the Hecate scene, in which the witches show Macbeth a line of future kings, who will spring from Banquo, mythical founder of the Stuarts. Despite their difference, the two monarchs were in a way so similar that they both would appreciate most the same compliment. It could be probably stated that both plays are similar to the extent to which were similar both monarchs.

Writing two plays flattering for two monarchs coming from two different dynasties appears to be quite a simple task, however, to accomplish the task successfully surely required a genius. Hence, Shakespeare should certainly be considered a genius playwright, not only because he was a master of fashioning, and so his plays were appreciated by the audience in his time, but also because his plays survived centuries and still have the power to bedazzle

and address the present audience, although the thinking and the way of life changed considerably.

5. Resumé

Divadelní hry *Richard III.* a *Macbeth* byly napsány v alžbětinské a jakobínské době, které byly dramaticky všeobecně velmi plodné, ačkoli by se mohlo zdát, že pro rozvoj divadla nebyly nejvhodnější podmínky. Je pravda, že po nástupu Jindřicha VII. na anglický trůn se začala situace v Anglii ekonomicky i politicky stabilizovat, jakkoli nejednoznačná se může tato stabilizace z dnešního pohledu zdát. Pro obyvatelstvo počátku 16. století bylo ovšem

uklidnění války růží samozřejmě obrovskou změnou k lepšímu, a tak i přes problémy, zvláště politické, které měly přijít, byla vláda Tudorovců vkročením do úplně nového světa. Tato změna nepřišla samozřejmě okamžitě; vývoj byl velice pozvolný, což se týká i vývoje divadla.

Za vlády Jindřicha VII. existovaly stále pouze kočovné herecké společnosti, jejichž herecké osazenstvo sestávalo pouze z několika stálých členů (herectví jako řemeslo v té době ještě neexistovalo), ale protože divadelní hry vyžadovaly obsazení až tří set rolí, zapojovali se do nich také obyčejní řemeslníci či zemědělci. Traduje se, že někteří šlechtici si dokonce vydržovali své nádeníky také proto, že se osvědčili v některých divadelních rolích. Kočovné společnosti neměly samozřejmě ani stálou divadelní scénu a jejich představení se konala v hostincích, na panských dvorech, či dokonce na vozech, které sloužily jako pódium. Z toho jasně vyplývá, že v takových podmínkách a bez stálé scény nemohla být používána výprava a kulisy, na které jsme zvyklí například v dnešní době. Herci mohli používat pouze kulisy a rekvizity, které mohli snadno nainstalovat a unést. Také jejich kostýmy bývaly spíše prosté.

Herectví začalo být natolik oblíbené a herecké společnosti se začaly rozrůstat takovou rychlostí, že se postupem času ukázalo nezbytné omezit jejich počet. Důvodem k tomuto omezení se nestala jen rychlost, se kterou se herecké ansámby rozrůstaly, ale také strach, který začaly nahánět jednak tím, že mohly roznášet mor a jednak ožehavými tématy, které se objevovaly nejdříve během přestávek a které se později staly námětem celých her. Již v roce 1533 byl vydán zákaz všech představení obsahujících ožehavá témata, která zesměšňovala postavy veřejného života. V roce 1572, za vlády královny Alžběty I., byl dokonce vydán zákon, který úplně zakazoval potulku pod hrozbou propíchnutí pravého ucha, v případě opakování prohřešku hrozila tulákům dokonce smrt a odepření kněze a posvěcené půdy. Tím se ovšem radikálně zkomplikovala situace potulných společností, herci se stahovali do měst a začali zakládat první divadla. Říká se, že první divadlo 'Red Lion' vzniklo již v roce 1566, ale to byla opravdu spíše výjimka. První stálá divadelní scéna v Londýně byla vystavěna v roce 1576 – název této scény byl opravdu prozaický, Divadlo. Toto divadlo mělo veliký úspěch, a tak se začaly stavět další scény. Alžbětinské divadlo bylo ovšem samozřejmě ovlivněno předchozím vývojem. Nově vzniklé divadelní scény, které mohly pojmout velký počet diváků - což bylo nezbytné, protože divadlo v té době navštěvovalo až 1500 Londýňanů týdně - neměly zastřešení, aby mohlo dovnitř vnikat světlo, výprava a kulisy zůstaly velmi prosté, což byla spíše výhoda, protože dramatici nebyli limitováni počtem scén a mohli se pohybovat v čase i místě s nesmírnou lehkostí. Právě proto používali tehdejší dramatici mnohé náznaky času a místa v dialozích svých postav a také mnohé divadelní rituály, které přetrvaly z dob středověké dramatické tvorby.

V hrách se tak objevovaly dlouhé monology, nadpřirozeno, násilí, ale i postavy, u nichž převažovala jediná chorobná touha, které ale často přinášely na scénu humor. Některé z těchto postav vycházely z publikem velice oblíbené Neřesti ze středověkých her, která byla často hlavní postavou hry a jejímž hlavním posláním bylo trýznit ostatní postavy. Ovšem vzhledem k tomu, že každá hra byla ve své podstatě poučením jak žít, byla Neřest na konci hry samozřejmě odsouzena k záhubě. Další důležitou tradiční součástí her se staly ženy, které byly schopny prorokovat a podle středověké tradice se v hrách objevovaly v jakési trojici. Využívány byly také symboly slunce a stínu, zvuky přicházející ze severní, ďábloví, strany a důraz byl kladem samozřejmě také na 'předurčení'. Alžbětinci totiž věřili, že každý člověk je předurčen k určitému místu na tomto světě, a pokud někdo překročil jakousi hranici a pokusil se vydobýt si vyšší místo, než mu bylo určeno, musel být nutně potrestán. A protože divadlo bylo více odrazem reality a tehdejšího myšlení než pouhou fikcí, 'předurčení' bylo využíváno v mnohých hrách, například právě v *Richardovi III.* a *Macbethovi*. I Jakobínské divadlo používalo mnohé z těchto symbolik, ale došlo i na změny, a to především ve scénografii. Jakobínské divadlo, na rozdíl od Alžbětinského, využívalo finančně náročných kulis a kostýmů, ohňostrojů, ale hlavně byly využívány tzv. 'masques', jež se staly velmi oblíbené, zvláště po nástupu Jakuba I. na anglický trůn. Jakub miloval pompéznost, a protože mu nedělalo nejmenší problémy utratit peníze za své pobavení, mohly se 'masques' za jeho vlády rozvinout více než za vlády jeho šetrné předchůdkyně Alžběty I.

Monarchové všeobecně ovlivňovali hry, které vznikaly. Není možné říct, že by se jednalo o nějaký diktát, kterým by se museli autoři divadelních her řídit; jejich vliv byl spíše nepřímý, ale zato všudypřítomný. Dramatici si museli dávat obrovský pozor, aby nezahrnuli do svých her materiál, který by mohl jejich monarchy urazit, jednak vzhledem k zákonu, který zakazoval jakkoli hanobit či zesměšňovat žijící monarchy, a jednak proto, že napadnutím svého krále nebo královny by jistě ztratili záštitu svých mecenášů, popřípadě samotného majestátu. William Shakespeare byl jeden z autorů, který se svou divadelní společností získal záštitu dvora, a jeho hry monarchy vždy spíše potěšily. Zdálo by se, že potěšit dva monarchy, Alžbětu I. a Jakuba I., kteří byli velmi rozdílní, je prakticky nemožný úkol, ovšem Shakespeare to dokázal, a přesto, že v jakobínské době musel do značné míry přizpůsobit svůj původní styl dobové chuti, dostal se dokonce pod záštitu samotného Jakuba I. Je ovšem pravda, že rozdíl mezi dvěma zmíněnými monarchy není vůbec tak diametrální, jak by se na první pohled mohlo zdát. Alžběta byla šetřivá žena, která zdělila tudorovský smysl pro ovlivňování veřejného mínění, Jakub byl rozhazovačný muž, který nebyl ochoten ustoupit ze

svých zvyků ani o píd' a jehož mínění ostatních absolutně nezajímalo, ale ve své podstatě byli oba stejně umínění a kontroverzní.

Alžběta se rozhodla, že se nikdy nevdá, a přes všechny nabídky k sňatku a prosby parlamentu, a přesto, že věděla, že nezplození potomka může přinést Anglii další problémy s nástupnictvím, trvala na svém až do konce života a dokonce jmenovala svého nástupce Jakuba tak říkajíc v poslední minutě. Najít ale materiál pro hru, která by Alžbětu potěšila, nebylo nijak složité. *Richard III.* byla jistě skvělá volba, protože tím, že Jindřich VII., Alžbětin dědeček, porazil na Bosworském poli Richarda III., nejen že dostal Tudorovce na anglický trůn, ale také přinesl zemi vytouženou stabilitu. S jeho nástupem to ale nebylo nijak jednoduché, protože jeho právo na trůn nebylo vůbec jednoznačné. Korunu ale Jindřich VII. získal a vzhledem k tomu, že Tudorovci byli skvělí propagátoři, dali svým historikům 'úkol' prokázat, že Richard III. byl opravdu jen krvelačné monstrum. Histogramové dokázali během několika let očernit Richarda III. takovým způsobem, že opravdu vznikla legenda o krvelačném znetvořeném monstře, které vyvraždilo všechny, co mu stály v cestě za královskou korunou, a které nezničilo celou Anglii jen proto, že ho zastavil odvážný Jindřich VII. Z dnešního pohledu je tato legenda naprosto nesmyslná, ale v době, kdy Shakespeare tvořil svou hru, nebylo pochyb o tom, že Richard byl téměř ďábel, a tak ho Shakespeare, na základě dostupných kronik také vykreslil.

V *Richardu III.* se jasně odráží středověká tradice i víra a myšlení alžbětinců. Richard sám je založen na tradici Neřesti; celé hře naprosto dominuje (mluví celou třetinu hry), od samého začátku hry a svého prvního monologu rozjíždí svou krvelačnou hru, ve které ovládá všechny ostatní postavy. Richard je nesmírně odhodlaný dosáhnout svého vytouženého cíle, získat anglickou korunu, a přesto, že na počátku hry vypadá jeho záměr naprosto nerealisticky. Richard je znetvořený (což alžbětincům naznačovalo jeho ďábelskost, neboť znetvoření těla bylo jen vnějším znakem znetvoření duše), ale díky svému odhodlání, bystrosti a manipulativnosti svého cíle dosáhne. Je ale jasné, že s alžbětinskou vírou v předurčenost nemůže na královském trůně setrvat. Ve chvíli, kdy Richard dostane korunu, jeho svět se hroutí, on sám ztrácí svůj nadhled, začíná ho pronásledovat černé svědomí za činy, které spáchal, a jeho předchozí klid mizí. Richard zůstává sám, pronásledován černými myšlenkami a na bitevním poli umírá rukou Richmonda, budoucího Jindřich VII.

I *Macbeth* byl napsán s cílem potěšit vladaře, tentokrát Jakuba I. Stuarta. Jakub nebyl dobrým manipulátorem veřejného mínění a vzhledem k tomu, že pocházel ze Skotska a nerozuměl příliš dobře anglickým zvykům, nebyla léta jeho vlády rozhodně tak úspěšná jako léta vlády Alžběty. Jakub si liboval v lovech, špercích, za které utratil ročně víc než za

armádu, a také ve svém milencích, kterým dopomáhal k vysokým funkcím jen díky jejich pěknému vzhledu. Ovšem Jakub byl také velmi vzdělaný, napsal několik knih a zajímal se o nadpřirozeno, hlavně pak o čarodějnictví. I v jeho případě sáhl Shakespeare po historickém materiálu. Jakub se viděl jako důležitá část skotské historie a vzhledem k tomu, že se v té době tradovalo, že Stuartovská dynastie má své kořeny u zakladatele Banqua, Shakespeare zkombinoval dvě legendy 11. století a napsal jednu ze svých nejkratších her (Jakub u dlouhých představení usínal), *Macbetha*.

Přesto, že se Shakespeare postavou Macbetha přehoupl od středověkého pojetí postavy z *Richarda* k novodobému, je mezi nimi mnoho podobností (asi tolik jako mezi podobností kontroverze Alžběty a Jakuba). Stejně jako Richard i Macbeth mluví asi třetinu celé hry, i Macbeth končí na bitevním poli zcela osamocen. Rozdíl je ovšem v tom, že s posunem k novodobému pojetí postavy Macbeth nenásleduje tradici Neřesti, tudíž jeho monology přestávají být zaměřené k publiku, ale jsou naopak introspektivní, stejně tak jeho ambice nejsou zřejmé od počátku hry, kdy vystupuje jako loajální poddaný, ale propukají až po zásahu trojice žen, čarodějnic (tady Shakespeare zůstává u středověké tradice), které slibují Macbethovi, že se stane králem, ale bohužel slíbí Banquovi, že on zplodí krále. Macbeth chvíli váhá, ale vidina koruny ho úplně zaslepí a s podporou své ženy se opravdu stane králem. Ovšem ani on nebyl pro trůn předurčen, a tak i on začíná ve chvíli nástupu na trůn kolabovat, je stíhán svým svědomím a stejně jako Richard vidí svou bezvýchodnost v situaci, ve které je nucen nepřetržitě prolévat krev. I on umírá osamocen.

Je tedy zřejmé, že ačkoli jsou obě hry napsány pro dva různé monarchy dvou různých dynastií, jejich hrdinové, nebo spíše zlodušci, jsou si v mnohém podobní, stejně tak jako ostatní symboly používané v těchto hrách, samozřejmě pokud odmyslíme 'masque', která byla vepsána pouze do druhé z těchto her a která se přičinila o to, že Shakespeareovo autorství této hry je často napadáno, právě proto, že tento styl není pro Shakespeara nijak typický. Jak bylo ale vysvětleno, je pravděpodobné, že pokud chtěl Shakespeare zůstat v přízni panovníka, který 'masque' zbožňoval, bylo nutné buďto přizpůsobit svůj styl a nebo spolupracovat s někým, kdo byl schopen 'masque' napsat. Je velmi nepravděpodobné, že by Shakespeare sám nedohlédl na to, aby Jakub odcházel z jeho hry s pocitem maximálního uspokojení. Shakespeare, který uměl dokonale vystihnout potřebu své doby a monarchů, by jistě tzv. 'Hecate scene' do své hry zahrnul, aby potěšil, protože Shakespeare bezpochyby patřil k několika génium renesančního divadelnictví.

6. Endnotes

1. V roce 1533 vydala koruna zákaz provozování všech interludií pojednávajících jakákoli kontroverzní témata. Některé morality totiž zesměšňovaly Luthera (některé prý kardinála Wolseyho).
2. Zakazoval potulku a žebrotu, hrozil přistiženým pobudům a žebrákům bičováním a proboděním pravého ucha, v případě opakovaného přestupku smrtí, ztrátou jmění, odepřením kněze a svěcené půdy.
3. Počínaje rokem 1574 se o herectví začalo v úředních dokumentech mluvit jako o dovednosti, profesi a umění.
4. Když však král Jindřich vešel do domu kardinála Wolseyho v doprovodu masek a několik děl přitom vypálilo salvu, jeden papír, nebo čím byly hlavně ucpány, vyletěl z děla na doškovou střechu. Zprvu to vypadalo na neškodný kouř a lidé dál pozorně sledovali podívanou na jevišti. Potom to však chytilo uvnitř a rozjelo se to jako kometa, takže za necelou půlhodinu celý dům lehl popelem.
5. Podle de Wittova zápisu z roku 1596 se vešlo do divadla *labut'* asi tři tisíce sedících diváků.
6. Diváci platili za vstup pencí, za částku od šesti pencí do jednoho šilinku byla místa k sezení buď přímo na jevišti, nebo na galeriích, které byly jako památka na původní hostince rozdělené na pokojík a z toho pravděpodobně vznikly dnešní lóže.
7. Génus Indiga Jonese ---- plně zazářil až za vlády stuartovských panovníků.
8. V masce s názvem *Masque of Queen* z roku 1609 vystupovala dokonce královna Anna v doprovodu šesti hraběnek a pěti dvorních dam.
9. Hlavní pozornost se soustředila na co nejnáročnější konstrukci scény, výpravu a oblečení dam.
10. Jones a jeho spolupracovníci věnovali mimořádnou péči výběru barev.
11. Aby děd královny Alžběty jaknáleží zdůvodnil svůj jinak pochybný nárok na anglickou korunu [...].
12. Edward Howes v dodatcích k Stowovým *Analům* napsal: 'Komedianti a herci byli v dřívějších časech velmi chudí a neotesaní ve srovnání s naší dobou. Nyní však se stali velmi bohatými a jsou to znamenití herci ve všech oborech, takže je různí velcí páni přijali za své služebníky.
13. Shakespeare a jeho druhové v povolání vydělávali asi sedmkrát až desetkrát tolik než průměrní řemeslníci a živnostníci nebo například dobře situovaní učitelé s ukončeným vysokoškolským vzděláním.
14. Vstup Jindřicha VII na anglický trůn neznamenal jen skončení války 'dvou růží', tj. zhoubných feudálních ruznic mezi královským rodem červené růže lancasterské a

Richardovy bílé růže yorské, nýbrž znamenal i příchod pořádku, pevné vlády a postupného hmotného i duchovního rozvoje.

15. ...poprvé od smrti Richarda Lvího Srdce přestal anglický král vládnout, aniž zanechal syna a dědice...
16. ...Jindřich byl natolik důvtipný, aby se prohlásil králem s účinností ode dne, jenž bitvě předcházel...
17.v jeho osobě se uskutečnilo spojení představitelů dvou královských rodů, bílé a červené Růže, jejichž svár hubil zemi po celých třicet předchozích let...
18. Tímto sňatkem především poskytl yorkistům, kteří se s ním proti Richardovi spojili, nezbytnou možnost, jak své odpadlictví omluvit [...].
19. Jindřich však byl cílevědomí a racionální panovník, kterému to nestačilo.
20. A tu se sáhlo po legendárním králi Britů Artušovi, pravzoru všeho rytířství a jednom z devíti velikánů světa, kteří [...] přišli na svět jako vtělení samotného Krista.
21. Hodnota historických příběhů byla v tom, že dávaly příklad jak žít, v případě králů jak vládnout.
22. ...právě tak jako v životě, literatuře a celém dramatu shakespearovské doby, byla pevně vkořeněna představa o podobnosti divadla a života; tato představa se stala součástí dobového jazykového vyjadřování a myšlení. Divadlo jako mikrokosmos v makrokosmu se jevilo všem jako věc logická a přirozená.
23. Hlavní jejich složky tvořily tanec a to, čemu se ještě za Shakespearových časů říkalo 'mumming', tj. vystupování v maskách.
24. ...skutečnou školou divadelního umění se staly hry náboženské, biblické.
25. v těch nejupravnějších [vystupovalo] až tři sta herců v pěti stech úlohách.
26. ...držel si jednoho služebníka kvůli tomu, že se po dva roky osvědčoval v lidových zimních a letních hrách jako sv. Jiří a Robin Hood i jako šerif z Nottinghamu.
27. William Cecil. Při nástupu královny Alžběty na trůn projevoval vůči ní velikou nedůvěru, protože měl jenom málo úcty k autoritě ženy. Odvážil se pokárat vyslance, kteří se obraceli na ni.
28. Alžběta byla mužem i ženou zároveň.
29. Alžbětu v literatuře Shakespearovi doby šmahem spojovali s vládkyní všeho života na souši i v moři, její panenskost srovnávali s panenskostí luny a činili ji vladačkou sublunární sféry, což byla nemalá pocta, jak brzy vyložíme.
30. Země stále bohatla.
31. V důsledku obtížného porodu mohl mít jednu lopatku poněkud výš, ale žádný dobový portrét ani historický dokument neproказuje, že by měl hrb a uschlou paži.
32. Pravdou zůstává, že na jaře 1603 nad smrtí Alžběty I. truchlil v Anglii málokdo.
33. Jakubovy nároky na trůn oslabovala I závěť Jindřicha VIII., jež z nástupnictví vylučovala všechny potomky Markéty Tudorovny, dcery Jindřicha VII. a manželky Jakuba IV. Stuarta.
34. Státní sekretář vsadil svou kariéru na stuartovské nástupnictví a trpělivým manévrováním se mu je podařilo zajistit.
35. Největší dojem učinilo na nového anglického krále bohatství země, jejímž vládcem se stal, oslňující nádhera pozdně alžbětinského světa. [...] Obrovské sály, stropy, jež byly v horních patrech stejně vysoké jako v přízemí, a velkolepé portréty na stěnách, malované v proporcích, s jakými se ve Skotsku nikdy nesešel, mu doslova braly dech.
36. Kontrast s jeho severním královstvím byl tak obrovský, že Jakub později psal o svém příjezdu do Anglie jako o vstupu do zaslíbené země.
37. Jeho vysloveně ženská záliba ve špercích ho mnohdy stojí až třicet sedm tisíc liber ročně, zatímco na armádu vynakládá jenom dvacet sedm tisíc liber.

38. Známa byla Jakubova žárlivost na proslulého francouzského lovce de Vitryho i poněkud 'zvláštní chování', které měl ve zvyku, když lov na jelena úspěšně skončil. Tehdy panovník seskočil z koně, prořízl ulovenému zvířeti hrdlo, vložil ruce do jeho útroby a pomazal tváře dvořanů, kteří jej doprovázeli, teplou krví.
39. Jakubovo vzezření shledal 'velmi přitažlivé', panovník byl podle něj 'veselý, bodrý až žoviální' [...]. Také podle Arthura Wilsona, oficiálního historika Jakubovy vlády, byl král 'střední postavy, spíše vyšší než menší, dobře stavěný, byť trošku obtloustlý, ale zdravý'.
40. Richard mluví o sobě, jako by vystoupil ze sebe sama a sděloval divákovi, co vidí.
41. Macbeth mluví k sobě a jeho monology jsou introspekce.

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Appendix 1.



By me William Shakespeare

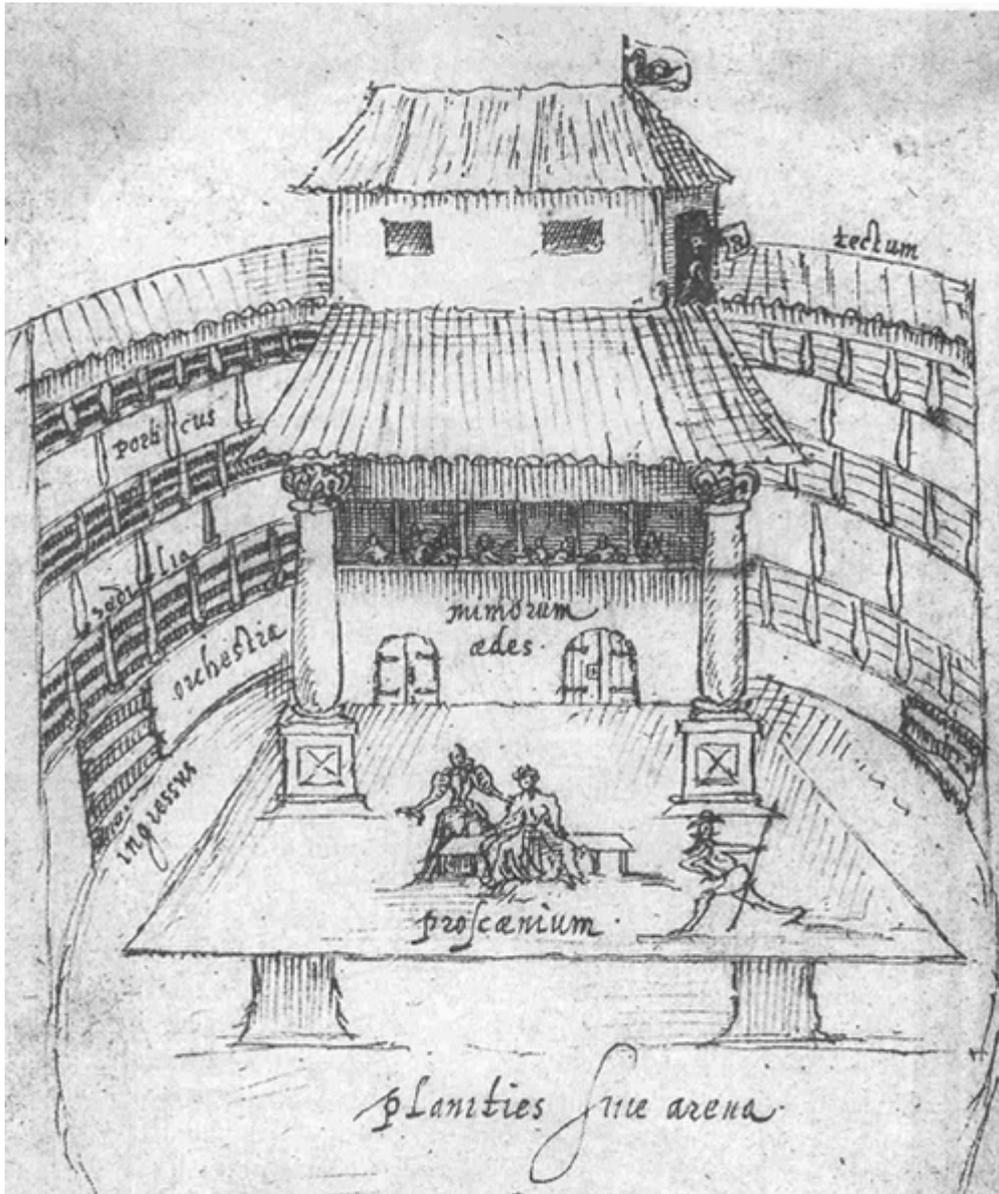
William Shakespeare in the famous Chandos portrait, that is believed to depict him. The portrait has been in the National Portrait Gallery, London, since 1856.

(artist and authenticity unconfirmed)

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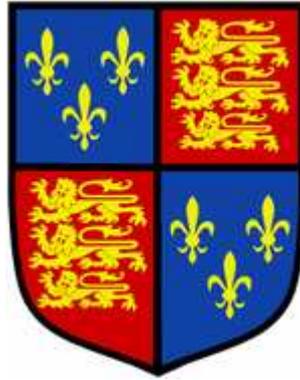
Shakespeare's signature from his will

Appendix 2.



A 1596 sketch of a performance in progress on the platform of the Swan theatre.
As the playhouses were all alike, this sketch presents a good example
of the typical playhouse of the Elizabethan period.

Appendix 3.



Arms of the Royal House of York



15th century portrait of Richard III



Richard III

Appendix 4.



Elizabeth I's arms



Henry VII, Elizabeth I's grandfather and the first Tudor on English throne



Queen Elizabeth I

Appendix 5.



James I's arm



James VI of Scotland and I of England
by Paulus van Somer (1603-13)

Original in the Museo del Prado,
Madrid



Anne of Denmark, James VI's wife

Appendix 6.



Mary Stuart in captivity, c.1578



Charles I, James I's son.
Painted around 1635 by Sir Anthony
Van Dyck.



George Villier
1st Duke of Buckingham and James I's
lover. Painting by Rubens.

Appendix 8.

Stuarts family tree

